LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連れ狼

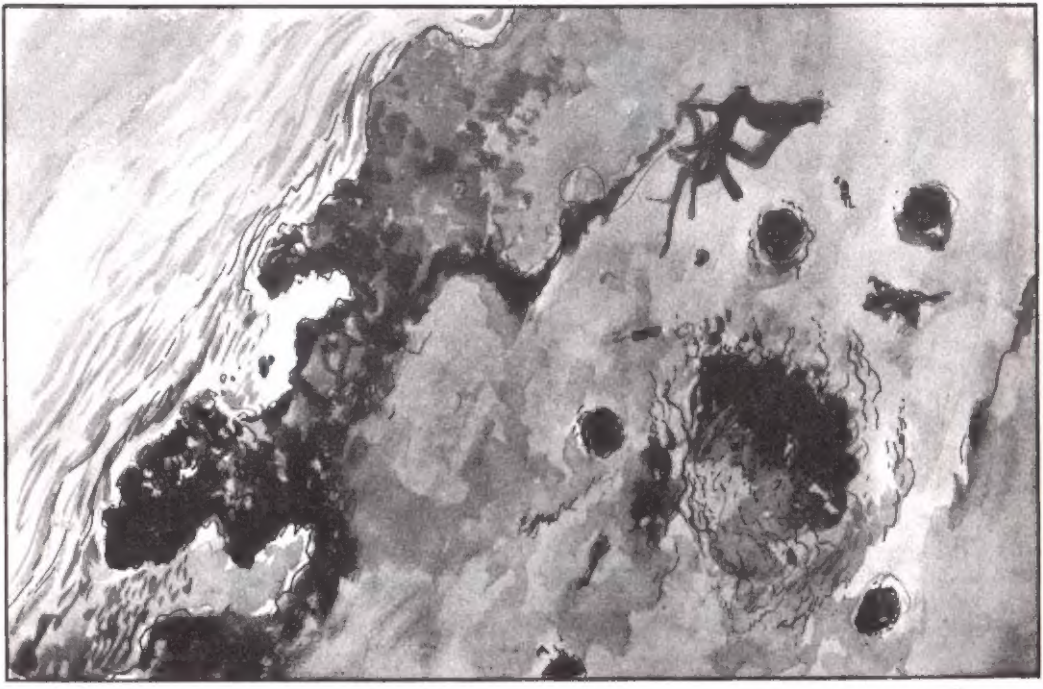
VOLUME 28

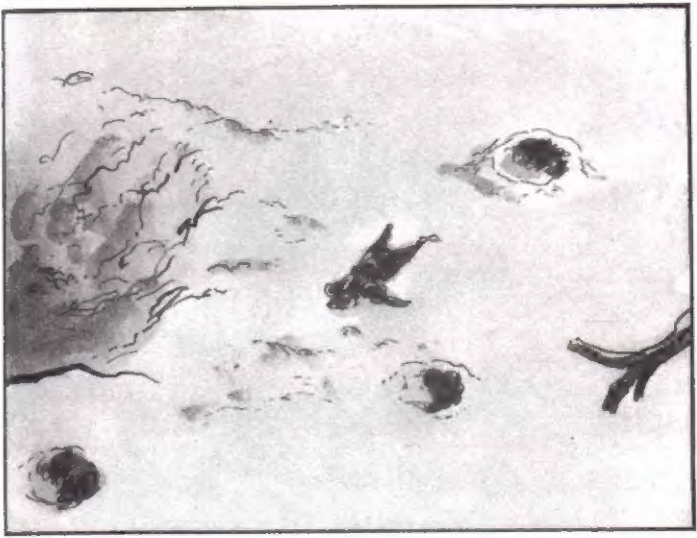
THE LOTUS THRONE

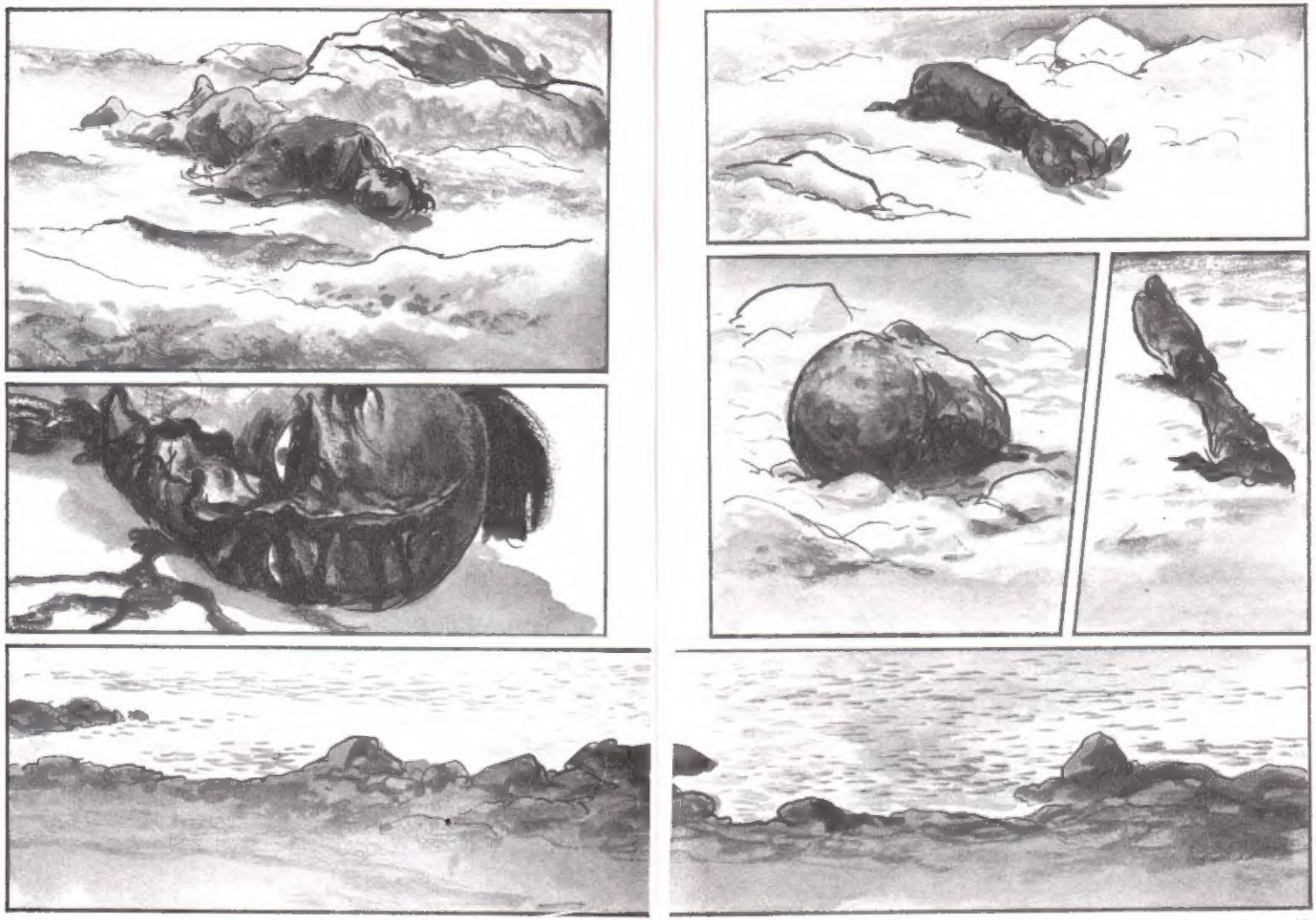
By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA

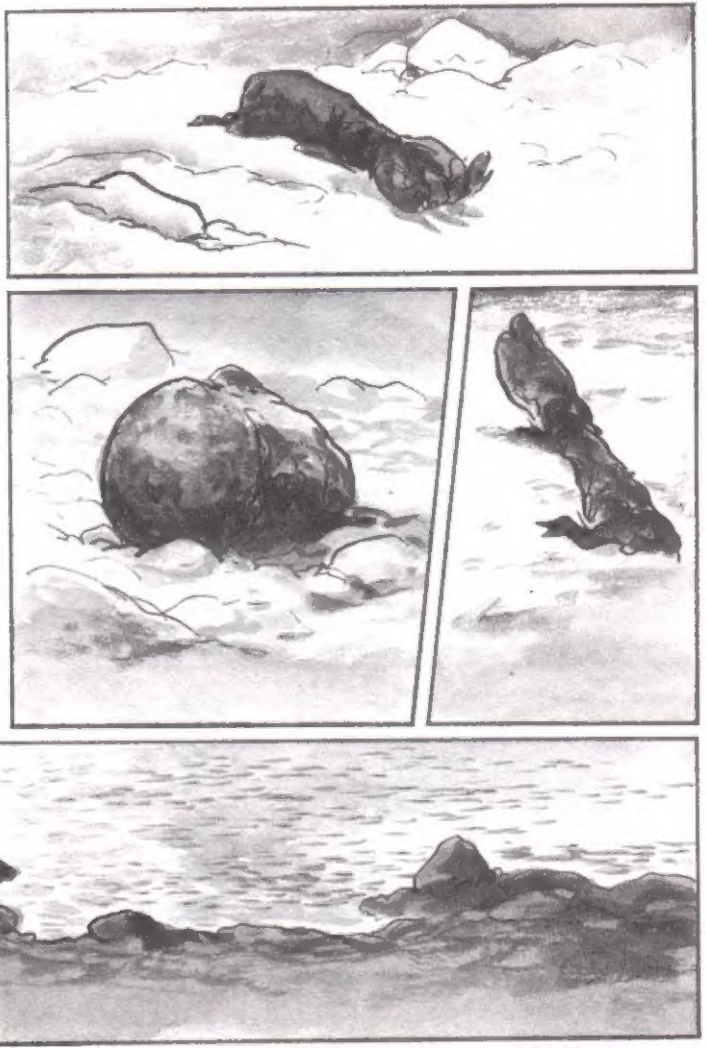
the hundred and thirty-eighth

Corpse Tree





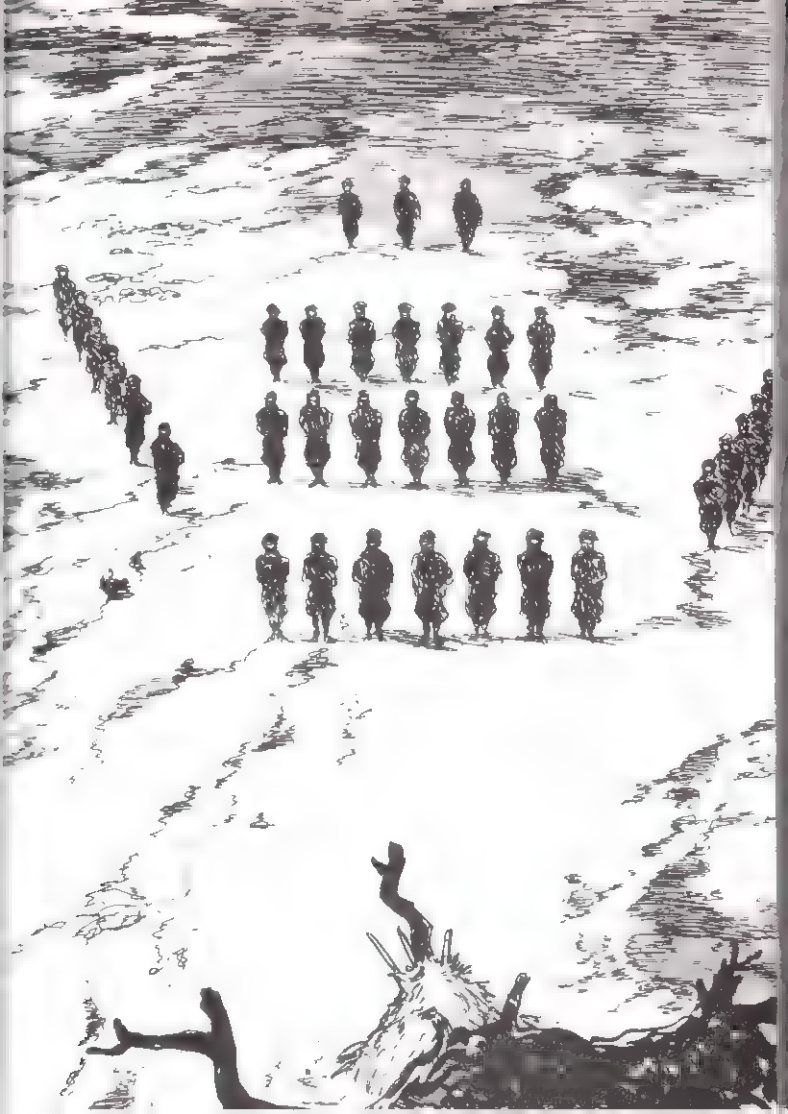


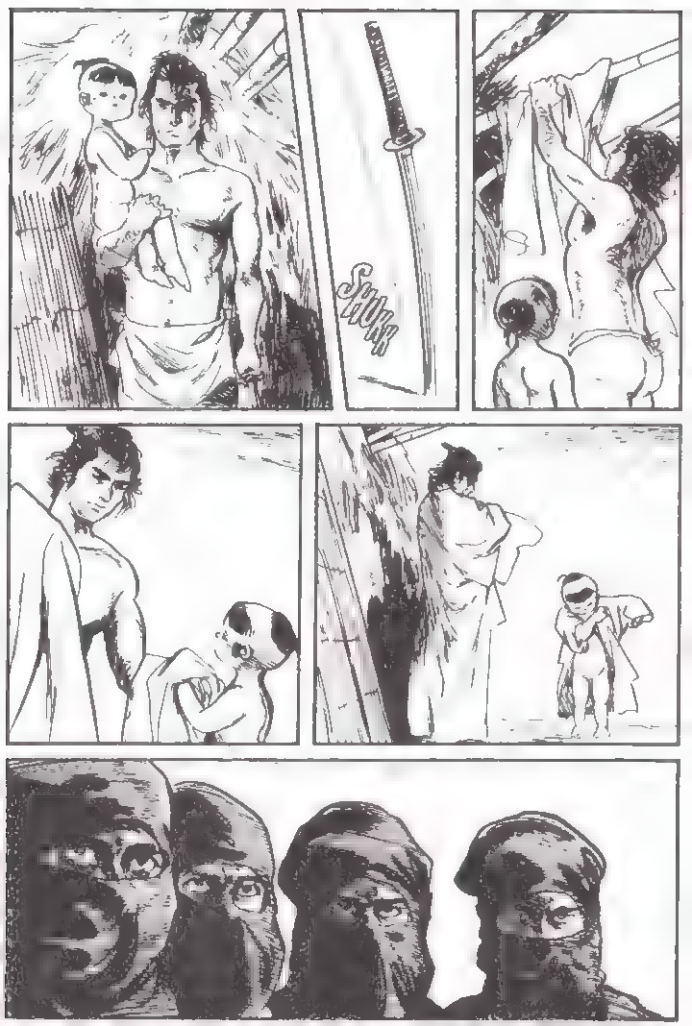


SHUSH

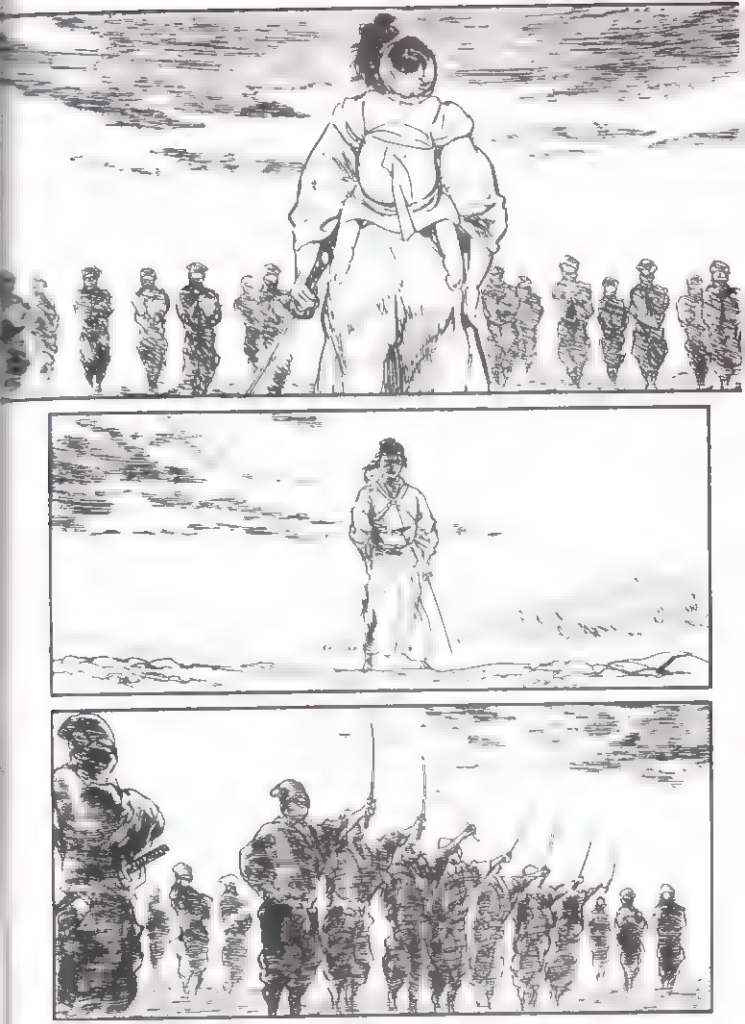
A ROSARY OF MUKUROJI SEEDS... LEFT BY DEAD GRASS?

THEY
COME
AGAIN.




SHUK

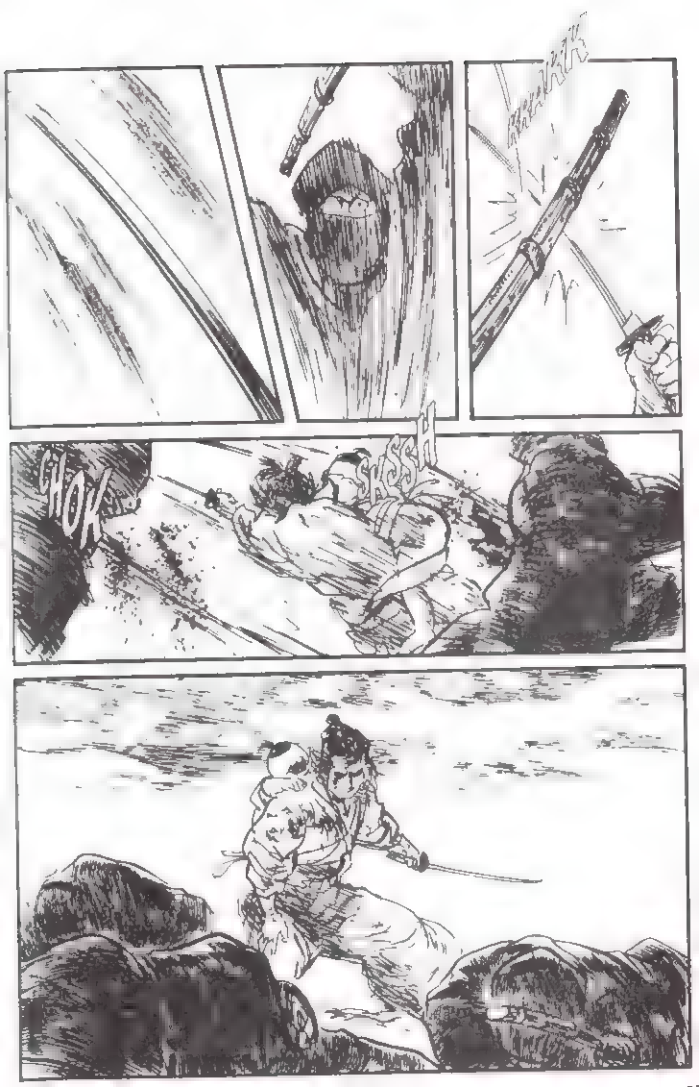
THE CLOUD OF BIRDS FROM THE RIKUTŌ— "WHEEL, LIKE THE FLOCK, SHIFT LIKE THE CLOUDS."
THEY KNOW THEY'LL NEVER FLOWER IF THEY CHOOSE FRONTAL ASSAULT. IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE OUT OF EXPLOSIVES. IT'S THE FINAL CHARGE
BREAK THE FORMATION. HARVEST THE LAST OF THE GRASS
THEN ONLY RETSUDŌ REMAINS
DAIGORO! THIS BATTLE DECIDES IT ALL!



SKSSHH

FWHHT
FWHSSH!H

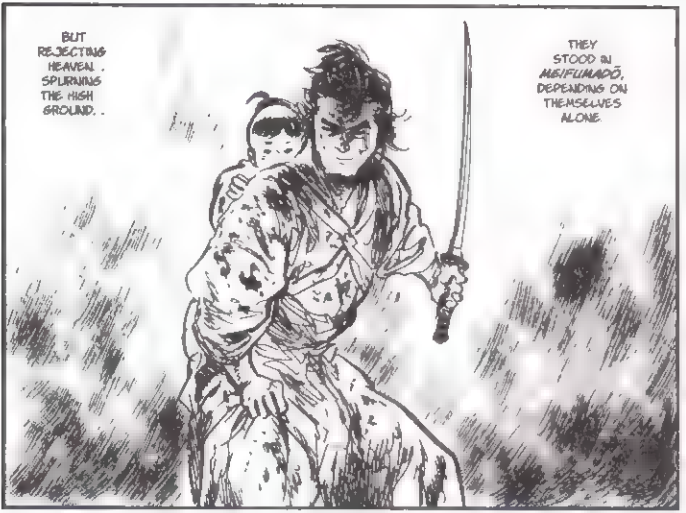
WHDD
SKLSSH
KRANG
EWUT
KANNNG
SHNGG
KANNG

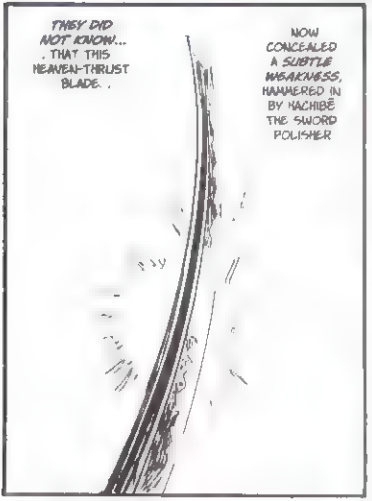

SHIK
GROK
SISS

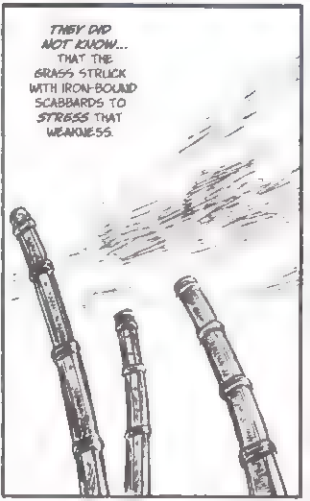
KRAK
KANG
SHING

KRAK
WHRAK
KLANG

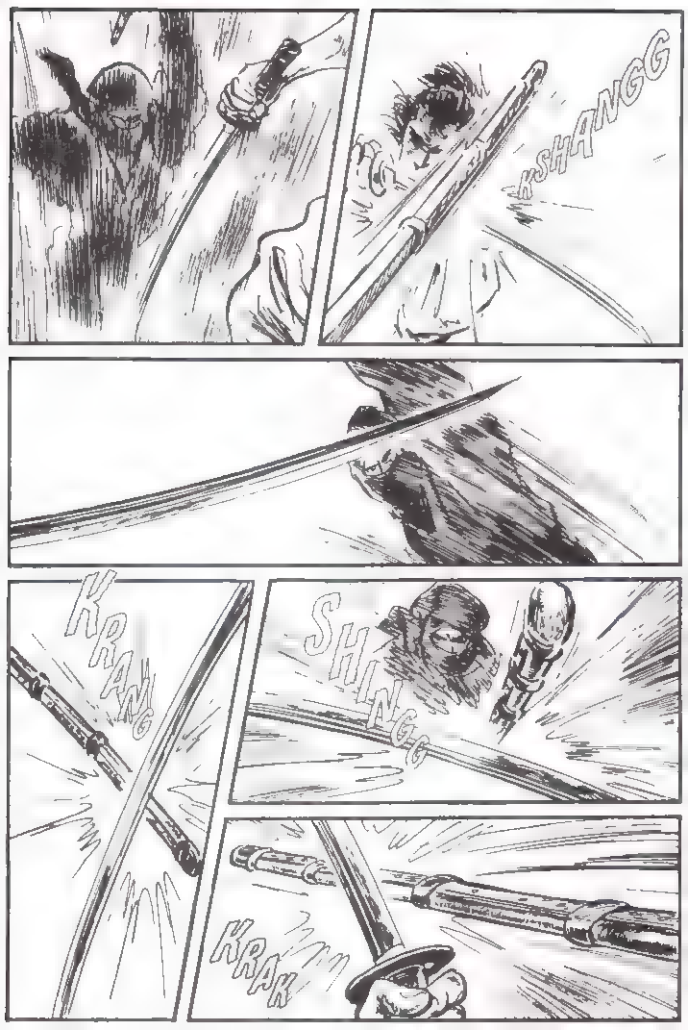
THE LAY OF THE LAND MAY TILT A BATTLE, BUT HEAVEN ALONE DECIDES THE VICTOR NEVER WAS IT TRUER THAN ON THIS DAY
THEIR FATE ON THIS BATTLEFIELD
ONLY HEAVEN KNEW

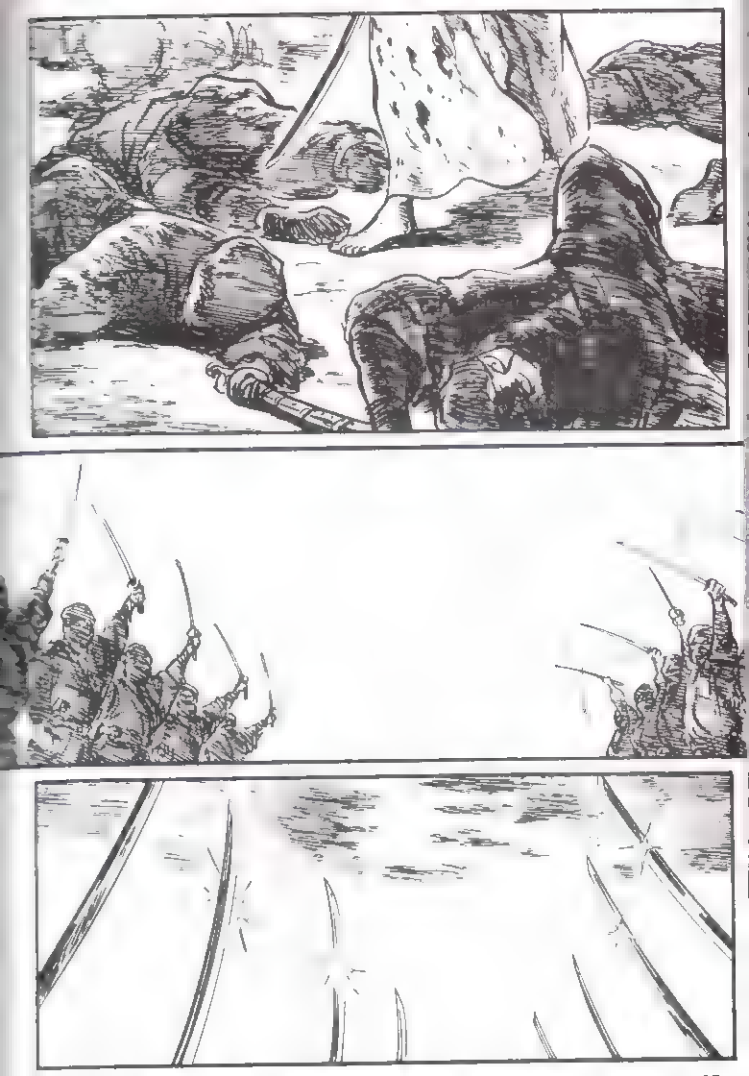

BUT REJECTING HEAVEN, SPURNING THE HIGH GROUND...
THEY STOOD IN MUSHUMADŌ, DEPENDING ON THEMSELVES ALONE.


THEY DID NOT KNOW... ...THAT THIS HEAVEN-THRUST BLADE...
NOW CONCEALED A SUBTLE WEAKNESS, HAMMERED IN BY HACHIBĒ THE SWORD POLISHER

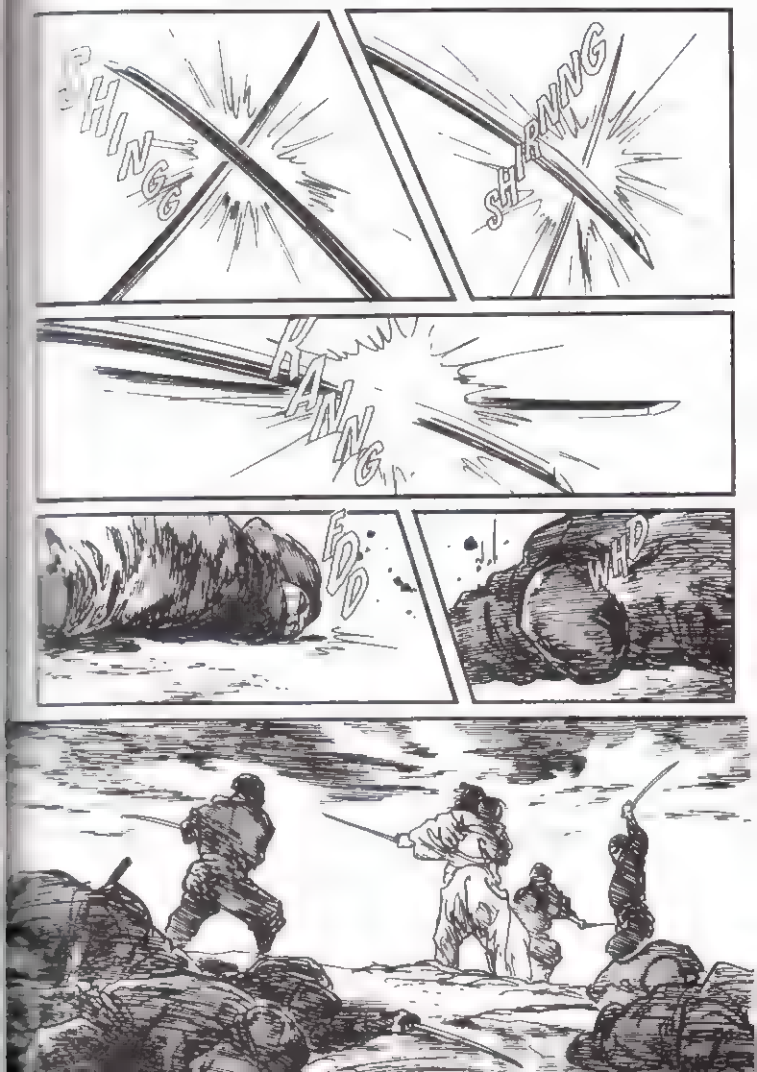

THEY DID NOT KNOW... THAT THE GRASS STRUCK WITH IRON-BOUND SCABBARDS TO STRESS THAT WEAKNESS.

GOZU-MEKU!
NOT EVEN
THE DEMONS
OF MEIFUMADŌ
COULD KNOW
KANG
KANG
KANG


KSHANGG
KRANG
SHINGG
KRAK



KANNG
SHINGG
KLANNG


SHING
SHRANG
KANG
FD
WHO

FWHIT
CLANGG
SCHOK

SPANNG

THPP
CHUKK
KTINGG
GHKK

THAP
PAPAAAA!

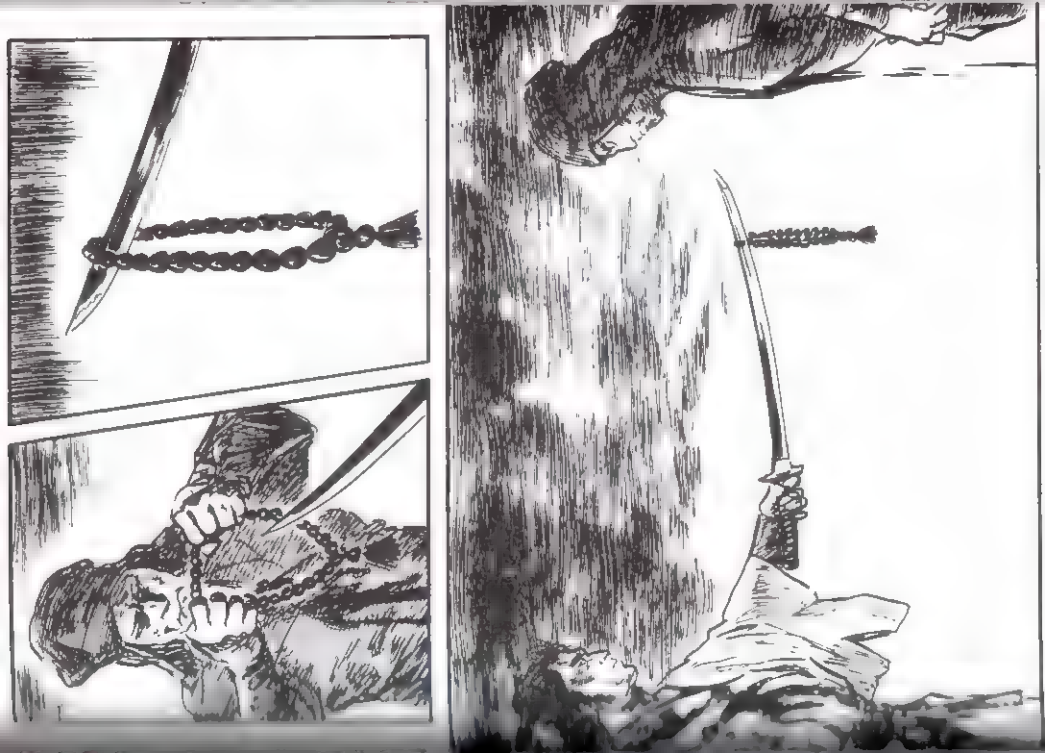
THE LAST OF THE GRASS ?
VERILY I AM KAGAMI TENKEN YAGYŪ KUSA!
WSHH

WHSSH
WHTT
FWSSS

FWSSH
SSSHUK

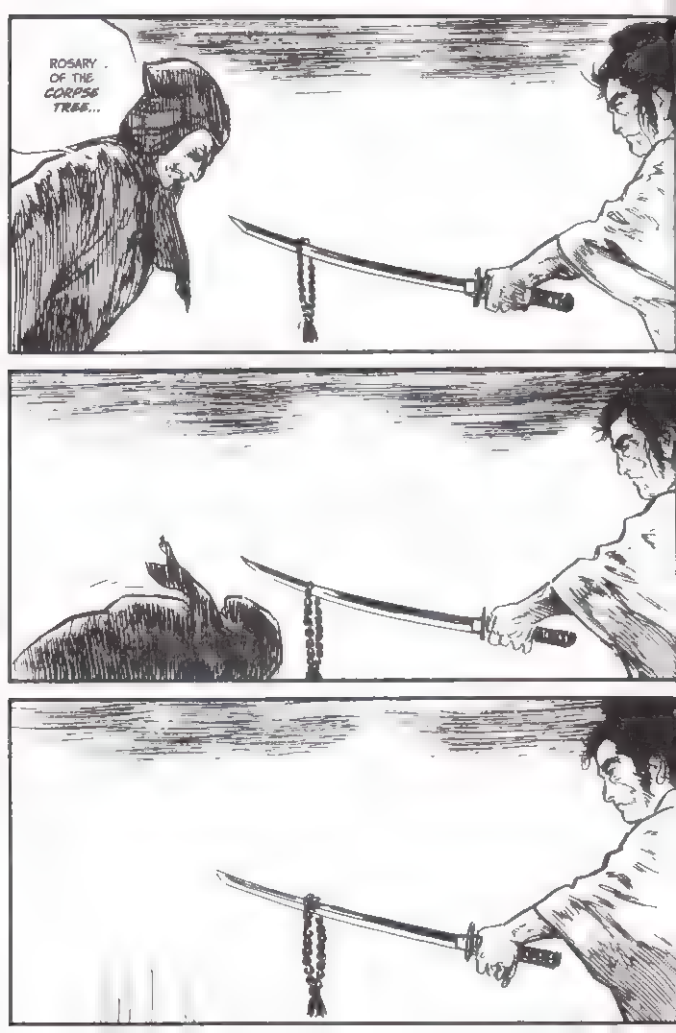
ITTŌ! WE DAMAGED YOUR DOTANUKI! NOT RE-SUDŌ-SAMA... WE ALONE!
DO YOU CALL US COWARDS...?!
NO! SUCH TRICKERY IS PART OF BATTLE. I THOUGHT MY GUARD WAS PERFECT
IT WAS CUNNING WORTHY OF THE YAGYŪ'S SHINOBI!

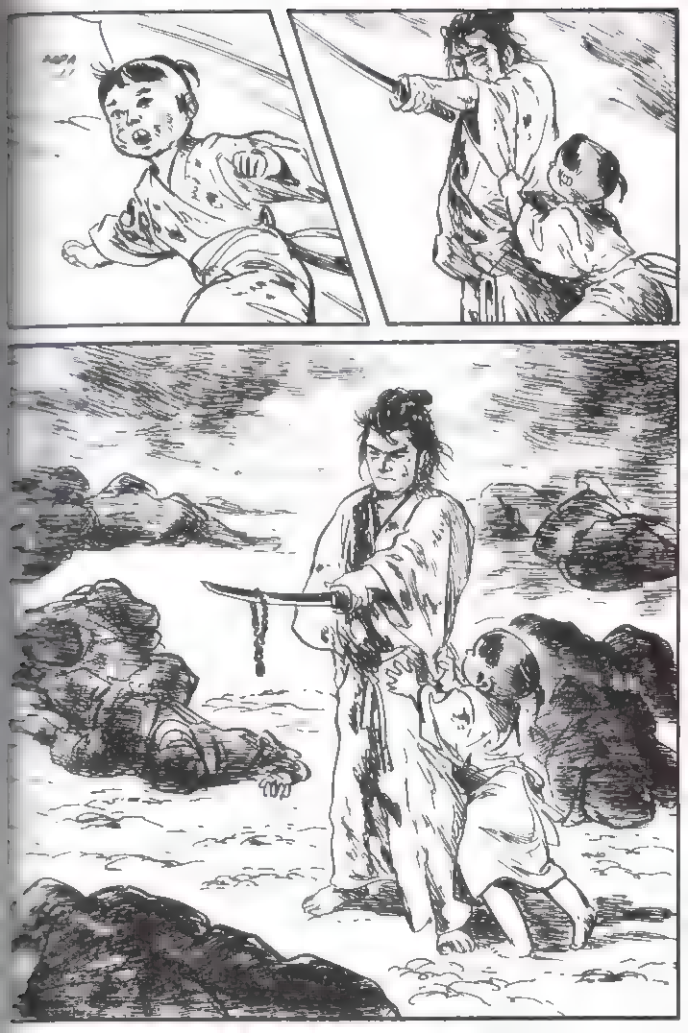
SHAAAK
HRRG!



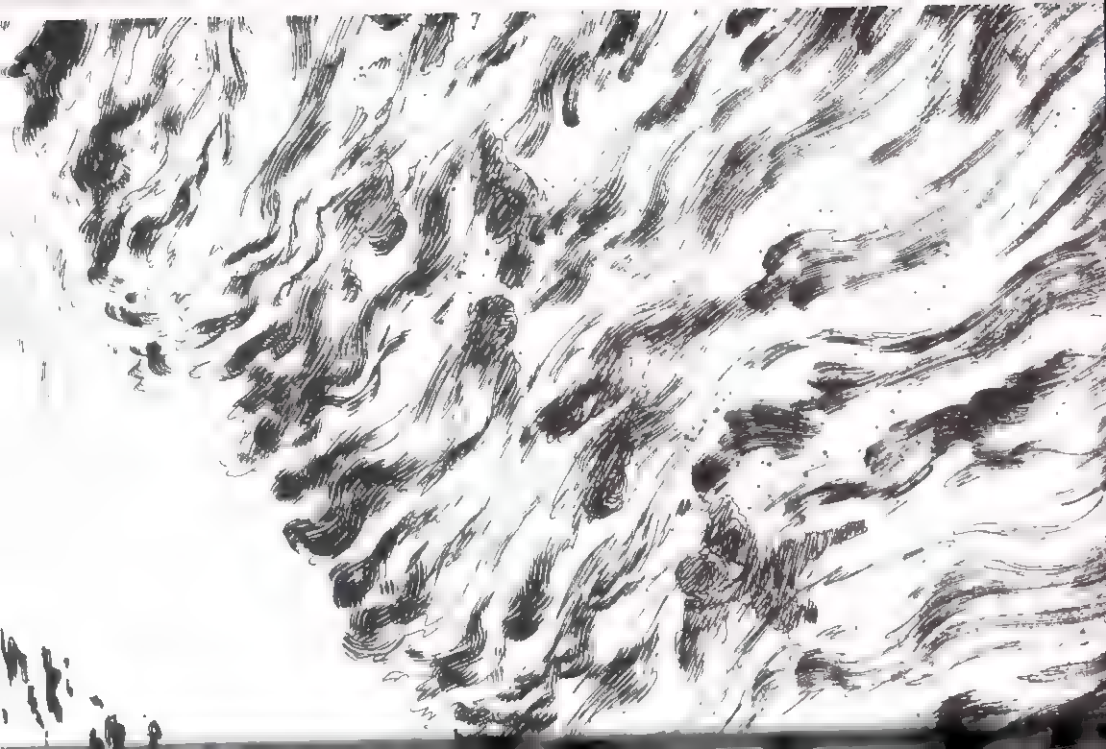
A NINJA'S LIFE. LIKE THESE SEEDS
WE DIE AT OUR MASTER'S WHIM.
AND THUS WE MAKE ROSARIES FROM THE SEEDS OF THE CORPSE TREE
THE CORPSE TREE SAY SOME, THE BODHI TREE OF THE SUTRAS.
BENEATH THAT TREE, THE BUDDHA ACHIEVED ENLIGHTENMENT HOW BETTER TO PRAY FOR OUR SOULS?

AND FOR THE SOULS OF YOU AND YOUR SON...
SO LET US PRAY
WARRIOR'S WAY SHINOBI'S WAY
WHY DO WE FIGHT, HUMANS ALL?
THE GRASS WITHERS YOUR LIFE DRAINS AWAY
PRAY ACCEPT THE ROSARY OF THE GRASS.

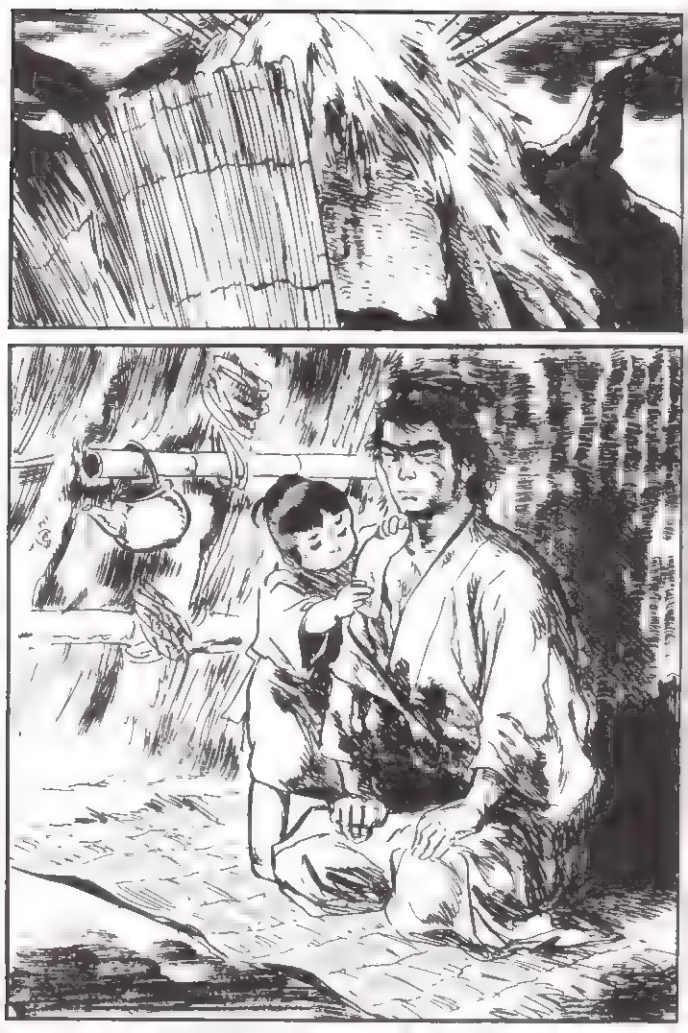

ROSARY . OF THE CORPSE TREE...

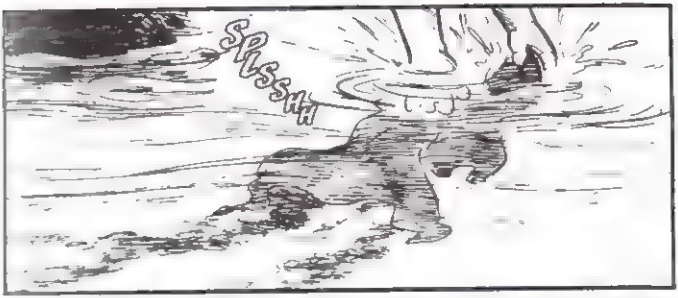


KCHK



SWISH




SPLSSHH

SKSSH

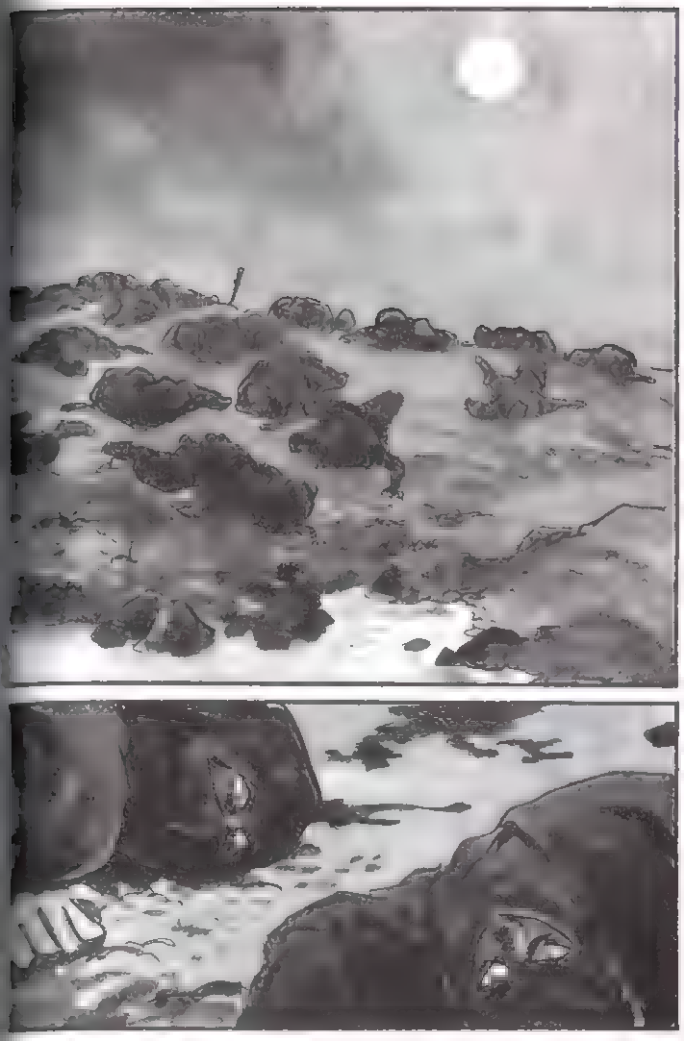
SLRP SLRP
SLRP
SLRP

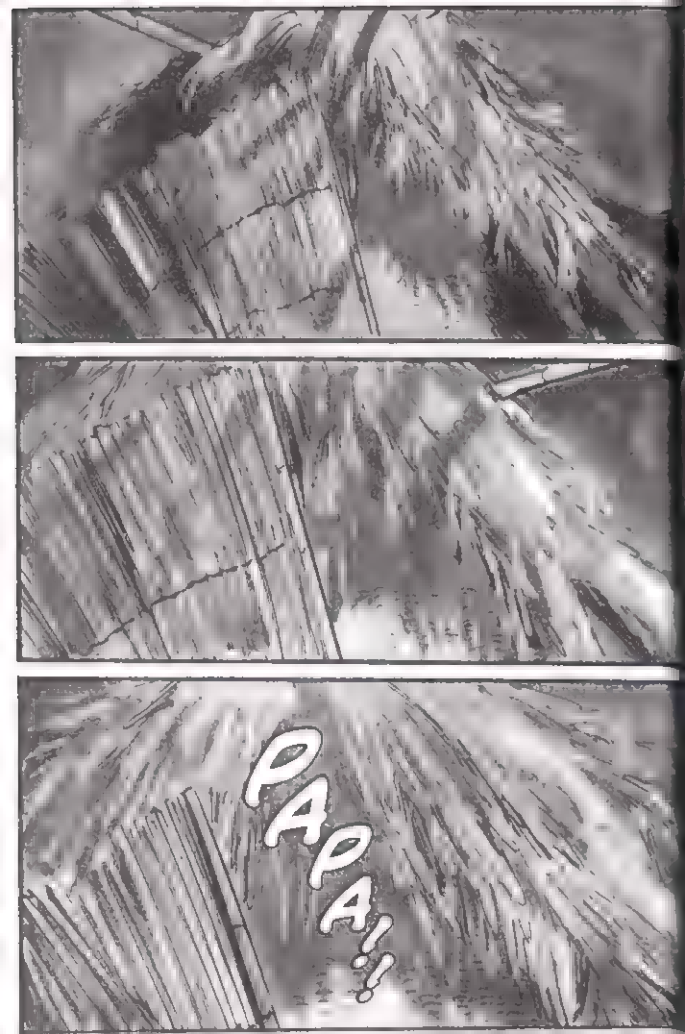
Slap Slap

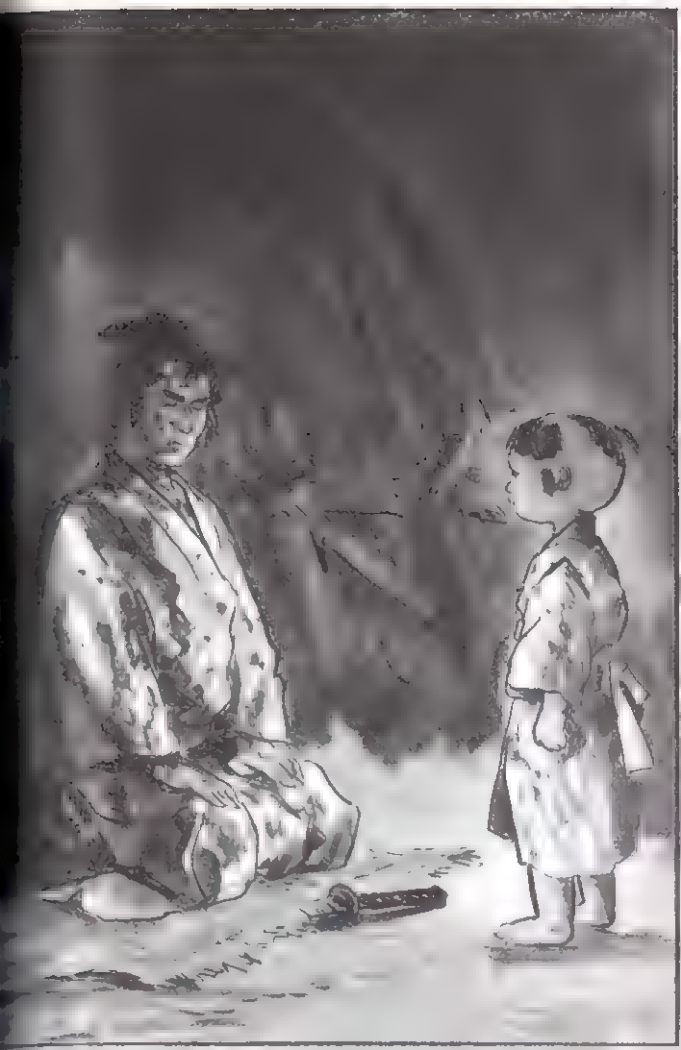
PAPA ?
PAPA...
PAPAA!

the hundred and thirty-ninth

Flute and Wave

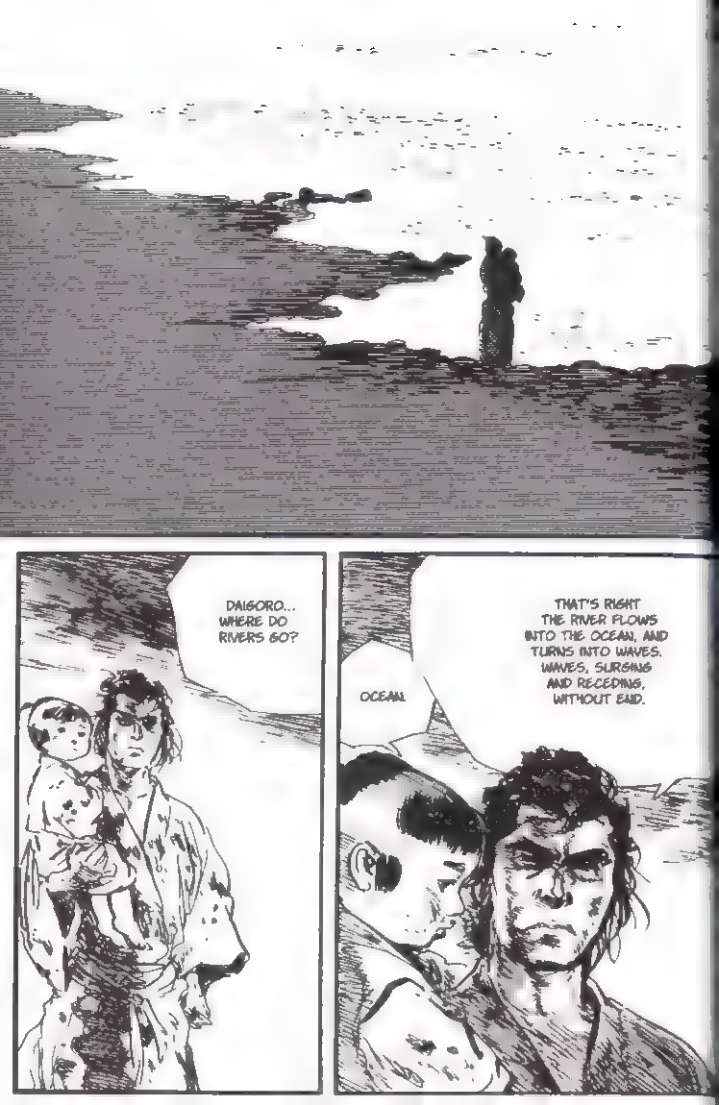



PAPA!!



PAPA!

PAPA!!

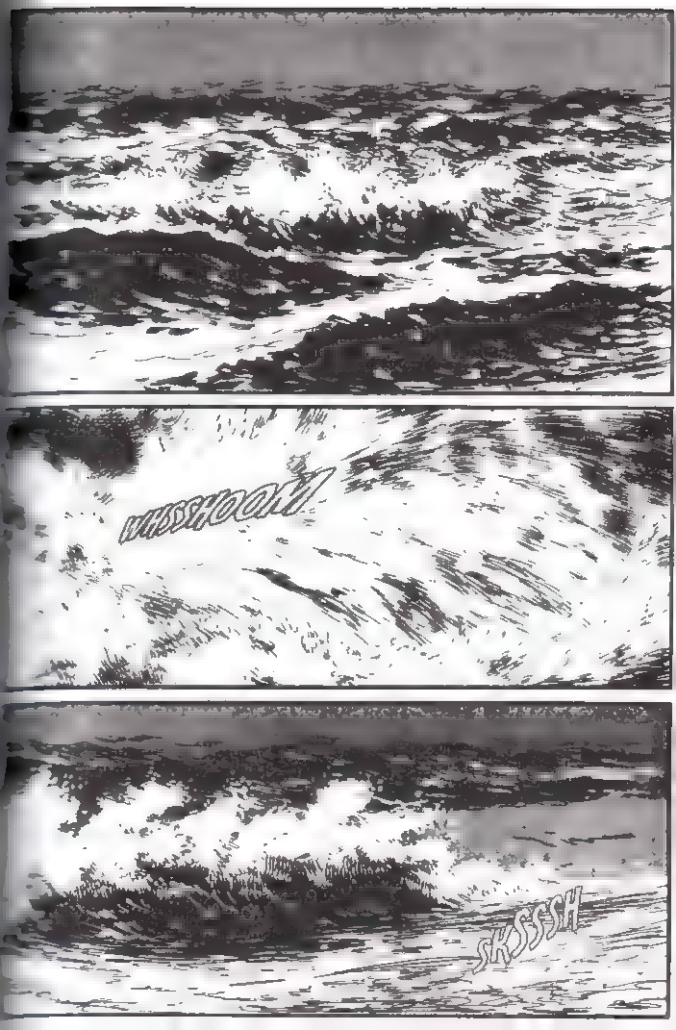

DAIGORO... WHERE DO RIVERS GO?
OCEAN.
THAT'S RIGHT THE RIVER FLOWS INTO THE OCEAN, AND TURNS INTO WAVES. WAVES, SURGING AND RECEDING, WITHOUT END.

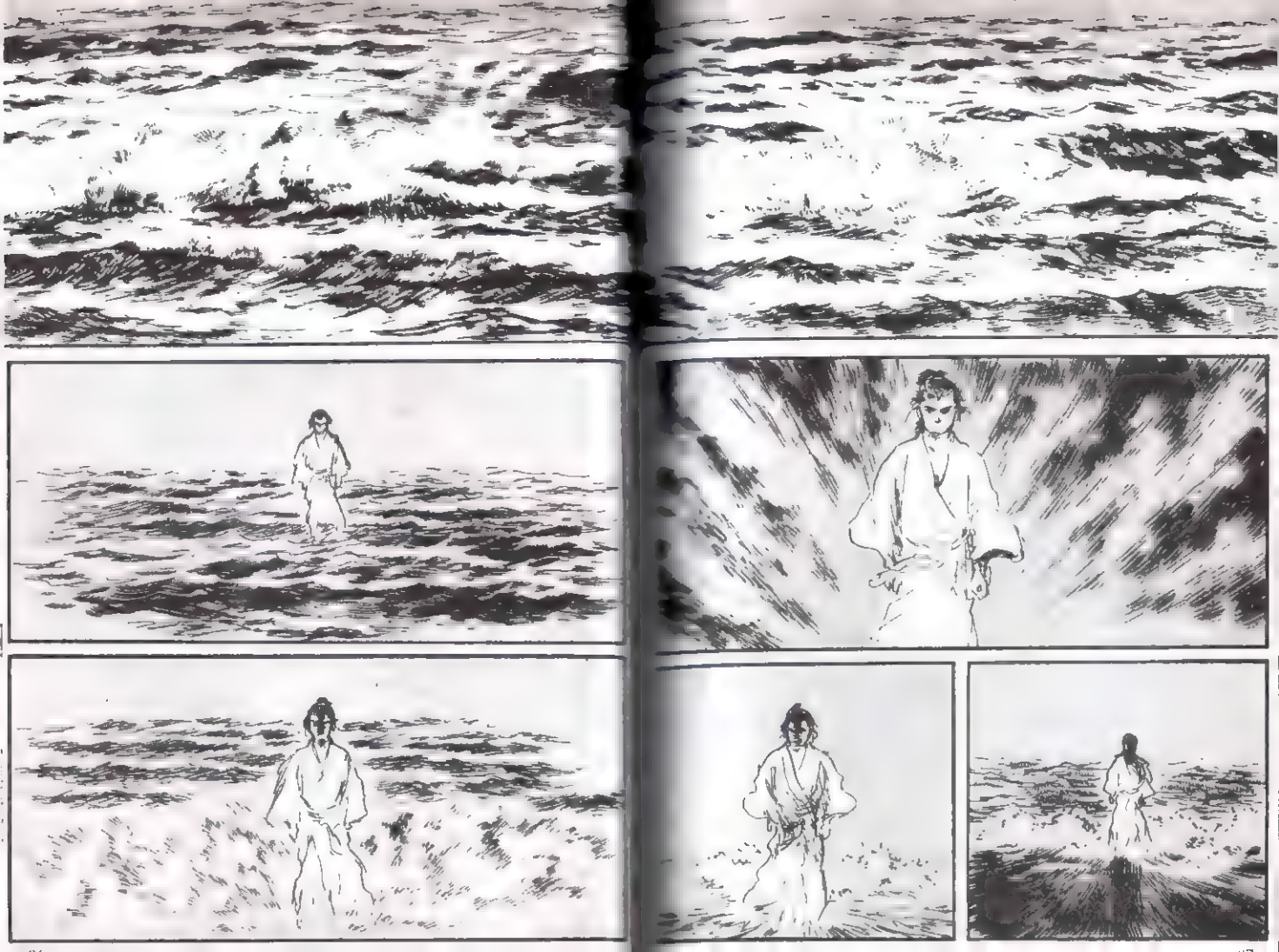
DAIGORO... WHERE DO RIVERS GO?
OCEAN.
THAT'S RIGHT THE RIVER FLOWS INTO THE OCEAN, AND TURNS INTO WAVES. WAVES, SURGING AND RECEDING, WITHOUT END.
OUR LIVES ARE LIKE THE WAVES. WE LIVE, WE DIE, WE ARE REBORN.

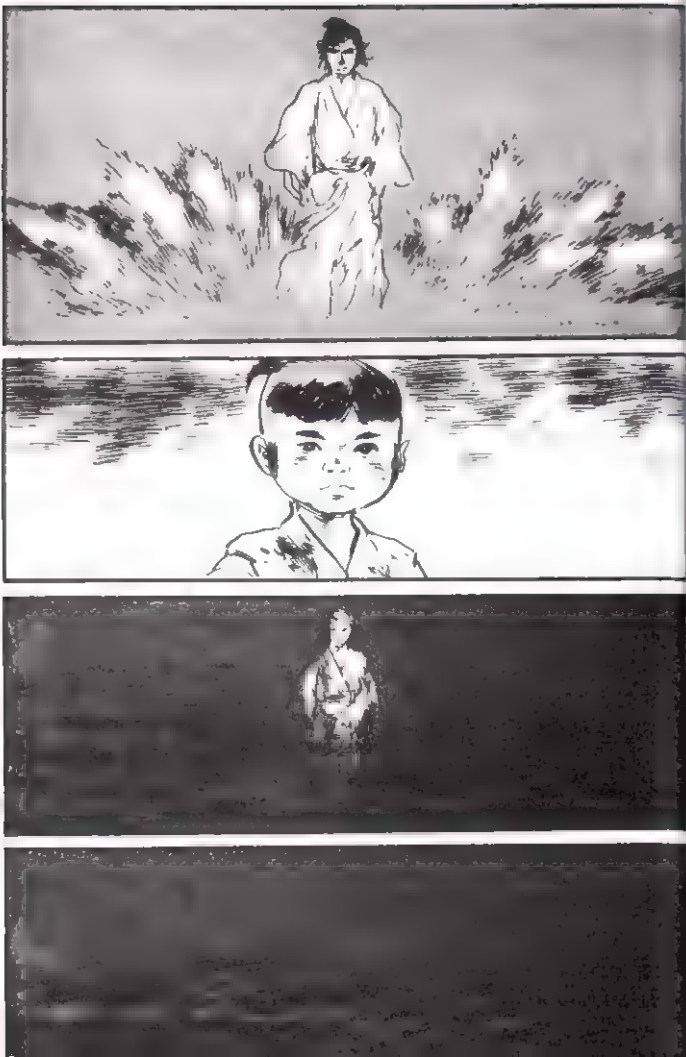
OUR LIVES ARE LIKE THE WAVES WE LIVE, WE DIE, WE ARE REBORN.

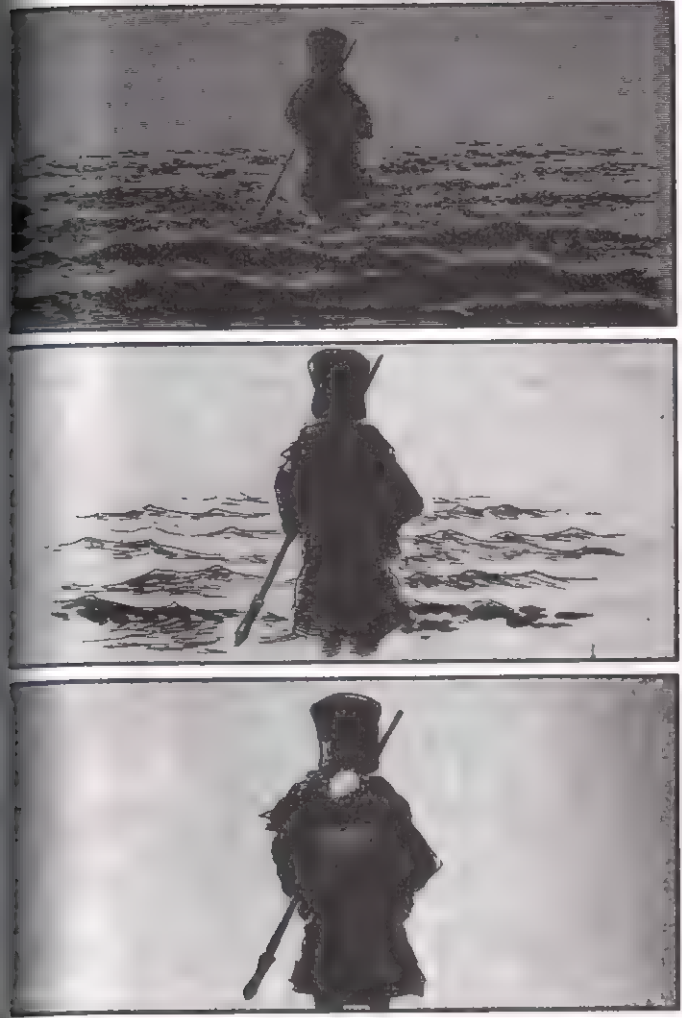
SOON YOUR FATHER'S BODY WILL BE A SILENT CORPSE.
BUT, LIKE THE WAVES, MY LIFE WILL NOT END
LIKE THE WAVES, YOUR FATHER WILL TRAVEL TO THE SHORE OF THE NEXT LIFE. HIS BODY MAY DIE, BUT HIS LIFE IS
YOURS TOO, DAIGORO.
LIVES ARE INDESTRUCTIBLE. IMMORTAL!
THOUGH WAVES BREAK AND BLOOD FLIES, NEVER SHRINK. THOUGH MY BODY FALLS, NEVER QUAIL.
THOUGH MY EYES SHUT, MY LIPS CLOSE.. DO NOT FEAR
IN THAT WORLD OF REBIRTH, I'M STILL YOUR FATHER
IN THAT WORLD AND ALL WORLDS, YOU ARE MY SON!
WE ARE FATHER AND CHILD! FOREVER!

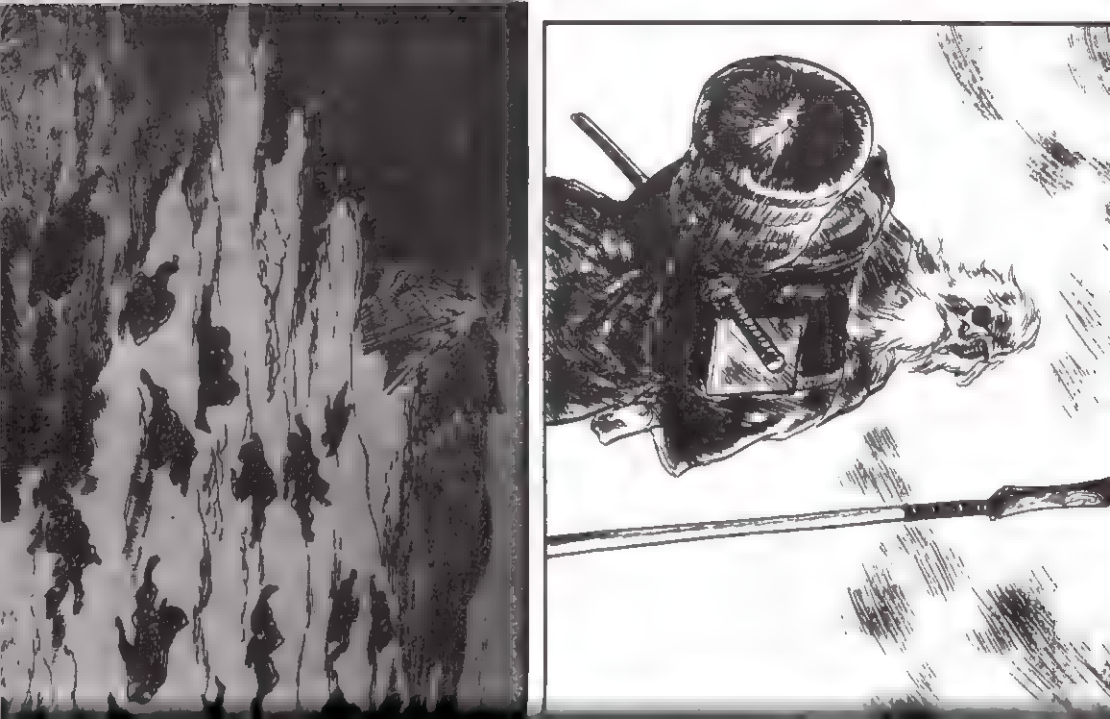
BUT YOUR FATHER'S BODY CAN'T FALL *YET* THE GRASS HAS WITHERED *BUT A YASYŪ REMAINS!*
COME, RETSUDŌ! SO LONG AS THESE LIMBS MOVE AND MY EYES SEE. .
. UNTIL MY FINAL *DROP* OF *BLOOD* FALLS, THIS BATTLE *SHALL NOT* END!


WHOOSH!!
SKSSSH









FUOHHHN
FUOHHHN
FUOHHHN

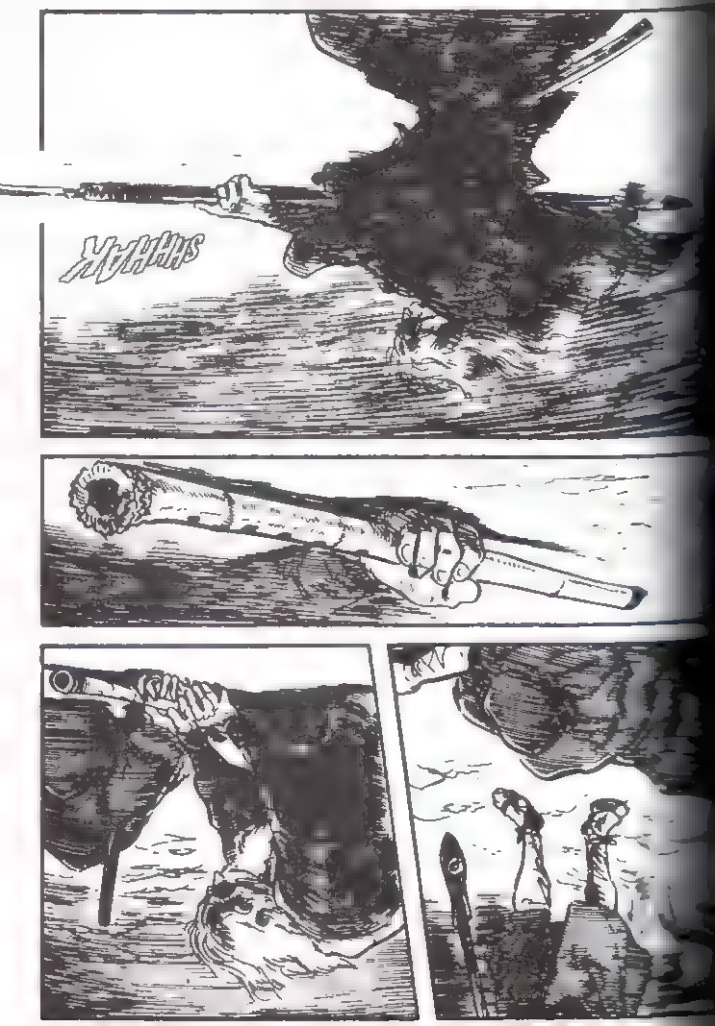
HYUUUUU
RYUU
BYUUUU
HYORO

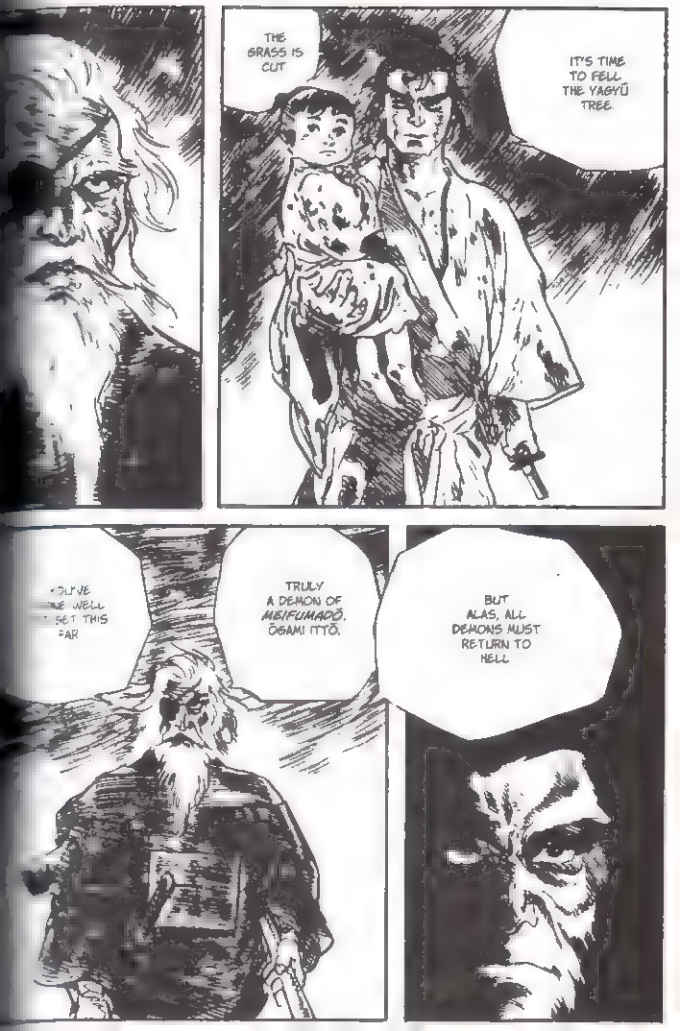
HYOHHN
HYOHHN
HYOHHN
RUUOO
HYUURURU

FYUHHHN
SHUUUOO
FUOHHH
HIYOHHHH
BYUOHHNN

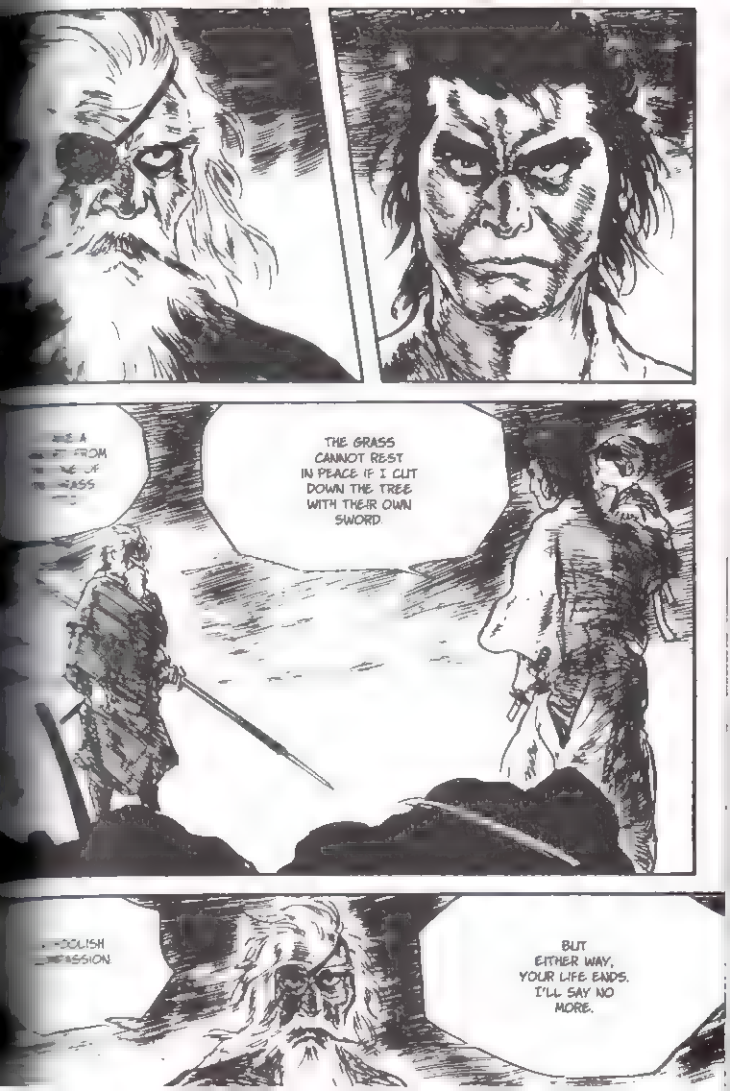
SHUURUU
SHUURUU BYUUU
DAHN
SHUURUU

SHUUUOO...

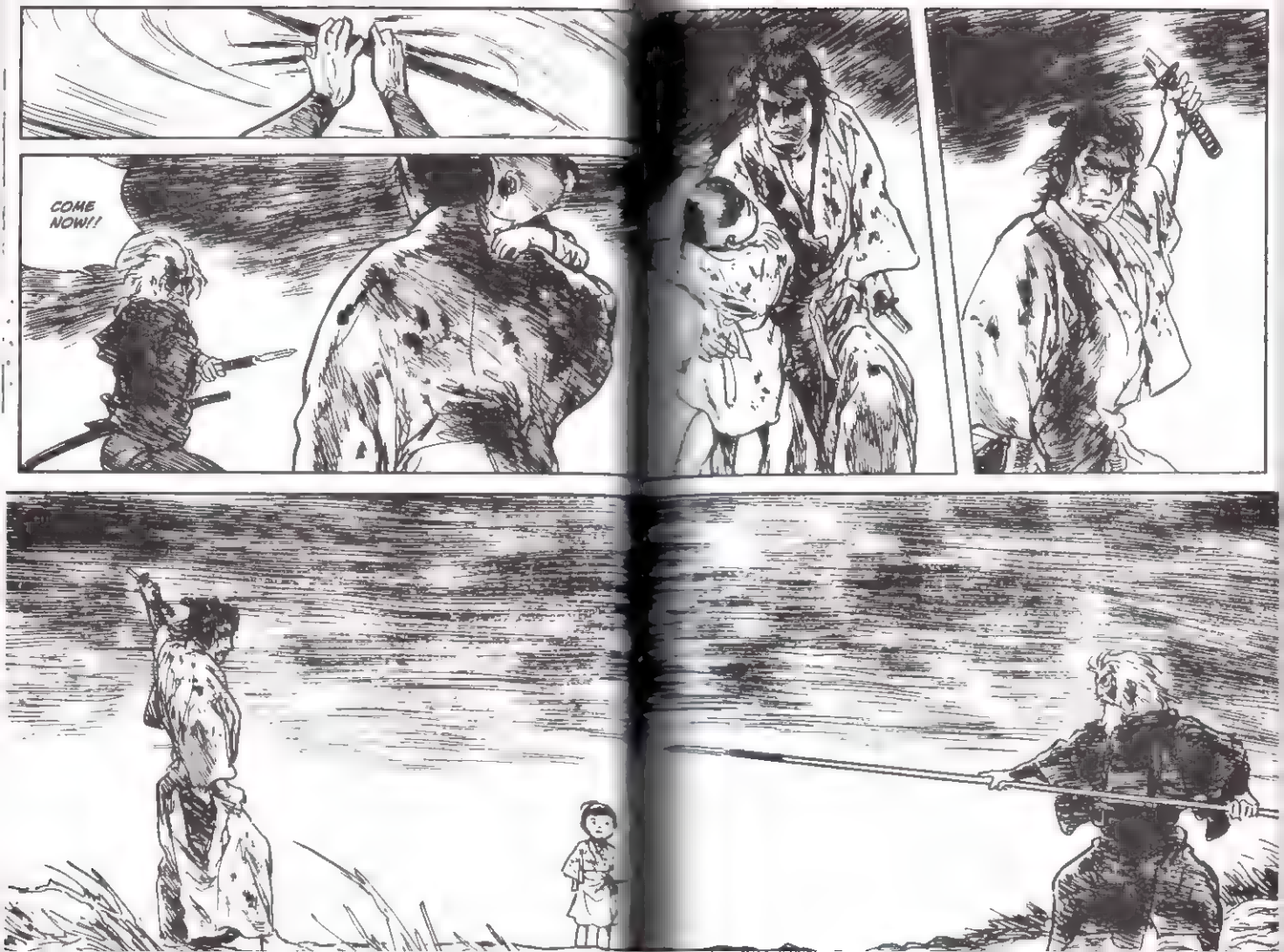

SHHHH

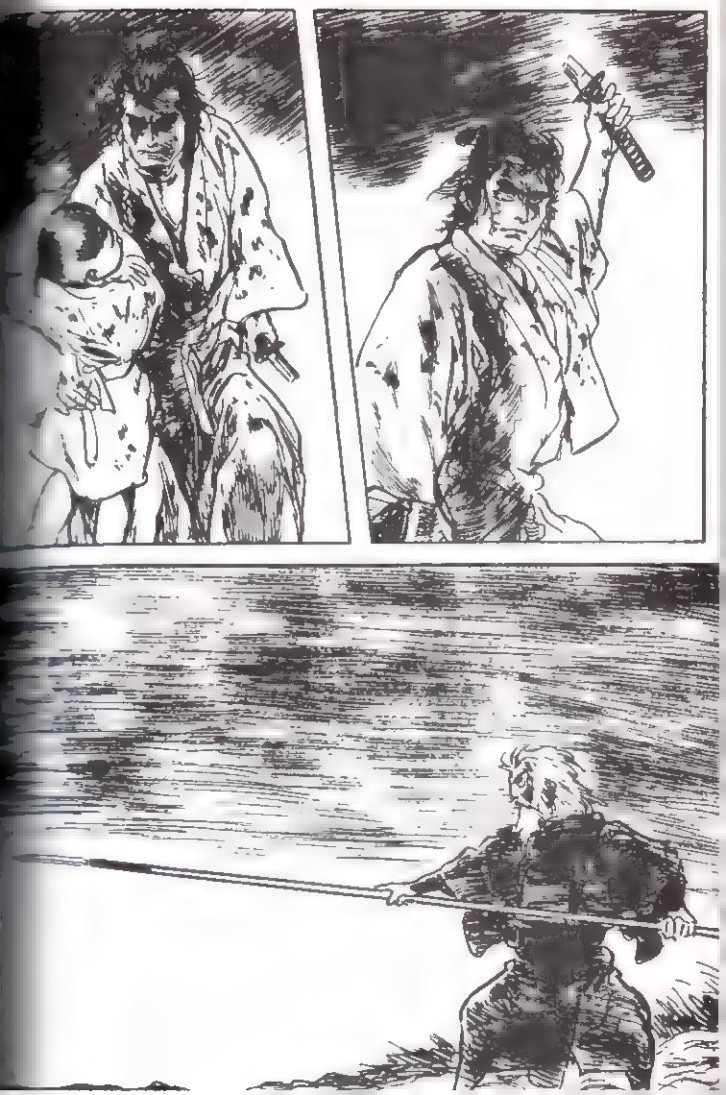

THE GRASS IS CUT
IT'S TIME TO FELL THE YAGYŪ TREE.
YOU'VE COME WELL SET THIS FAR
TRULY A DEMON OF MEIFUMADŌ. ŌGAMI ITTŌ.
BUT ALAS, ALL DEMONS MUST RETURN TO HELL

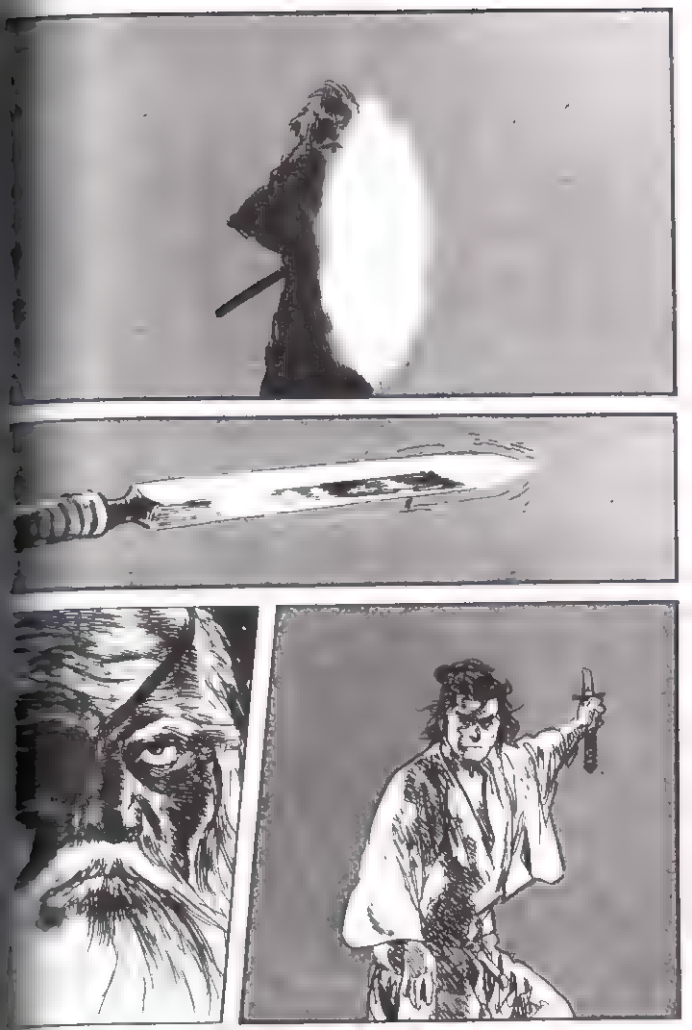
YOU'VE DRUNK DEEP OF MY CLAN'S BLOOD. YOUR FINE DŌTANUKI IS BROKEN.
AND NOW THAT WOUND YOU AND YOUR SON WILL NOT SEE THE DAWN. ACCEPT THIS.
YOUR CLAN REIGNED THROUGHOUT JAPAN, AND NOW SEE WHAT'S LEFT
TRUNK WITHERS WITHOUT ITS ROOTS I CAN TOPPLE IT WITH MY DYING BREATH.

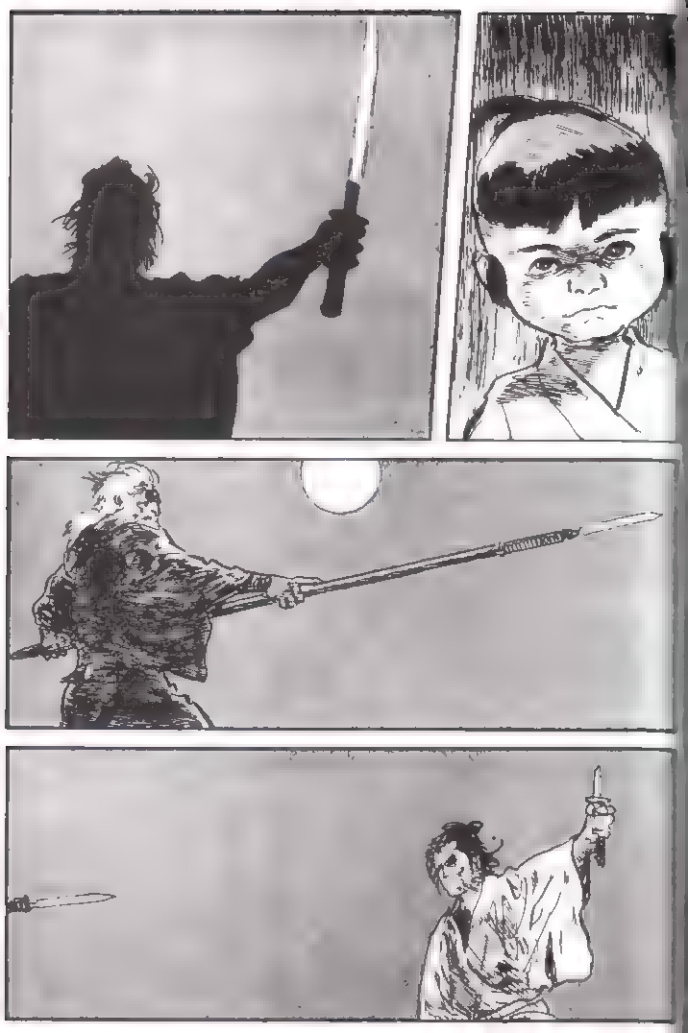

...E A
...T FROM
...E OF
...ASS
...
THE GRASS CANNOT REST IN PEACE IF I CUT DOWN THE TREE WITH THEIR OWN SWORD.
...OOLISH
...ESSION
BUT EITHER WAY, YOUR LIFE ENDS. I'LL SAY NO MORE.

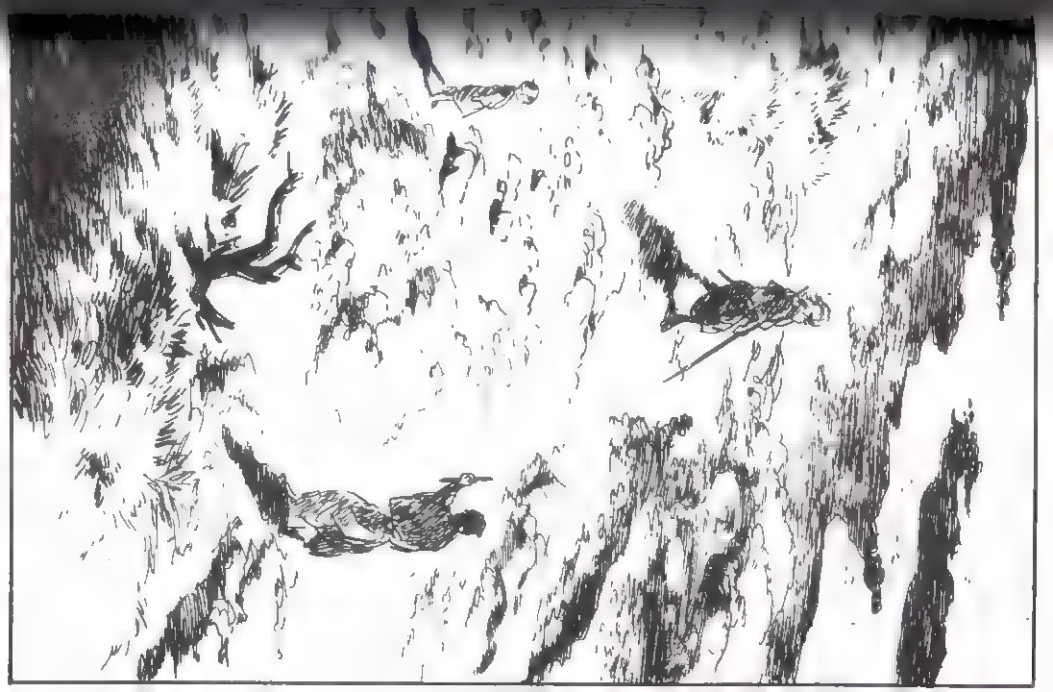
COME NOW!!

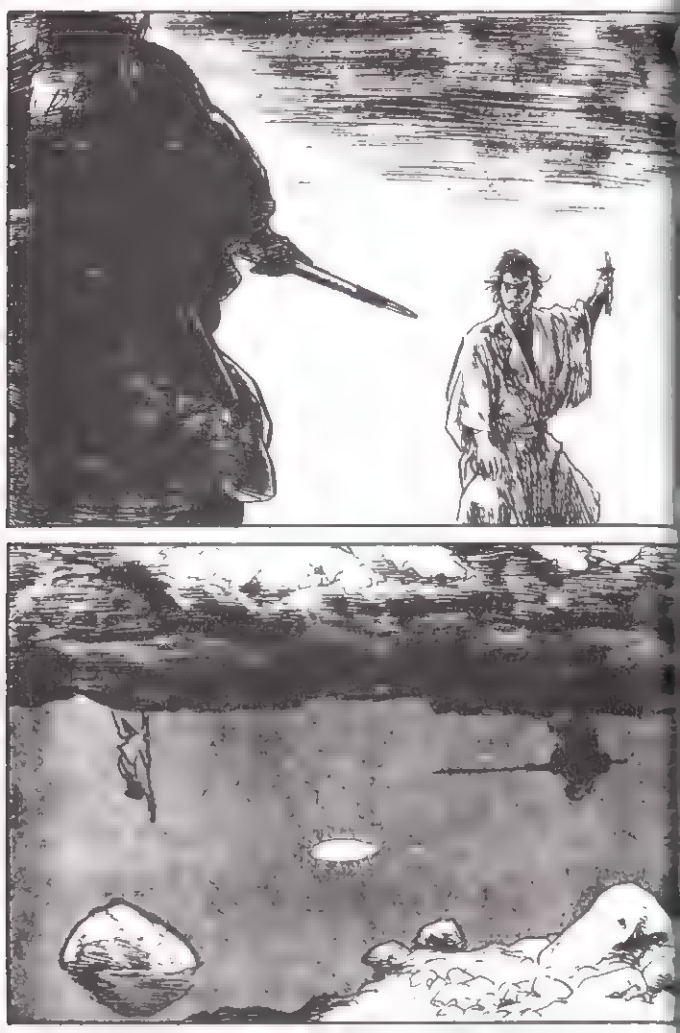

COME NOW!!

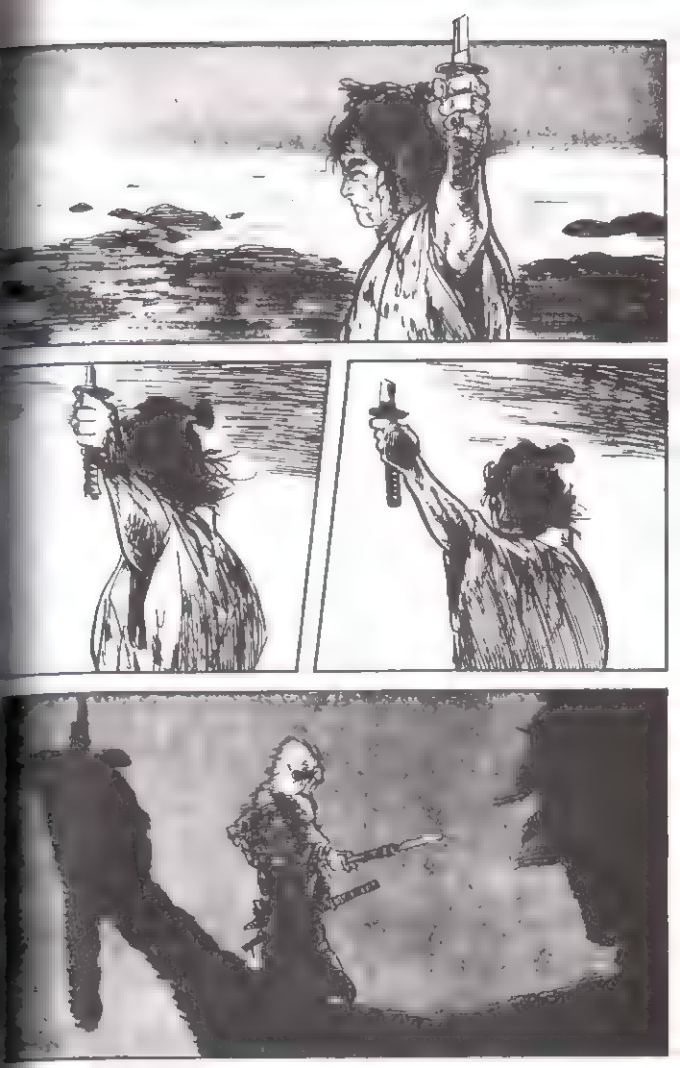


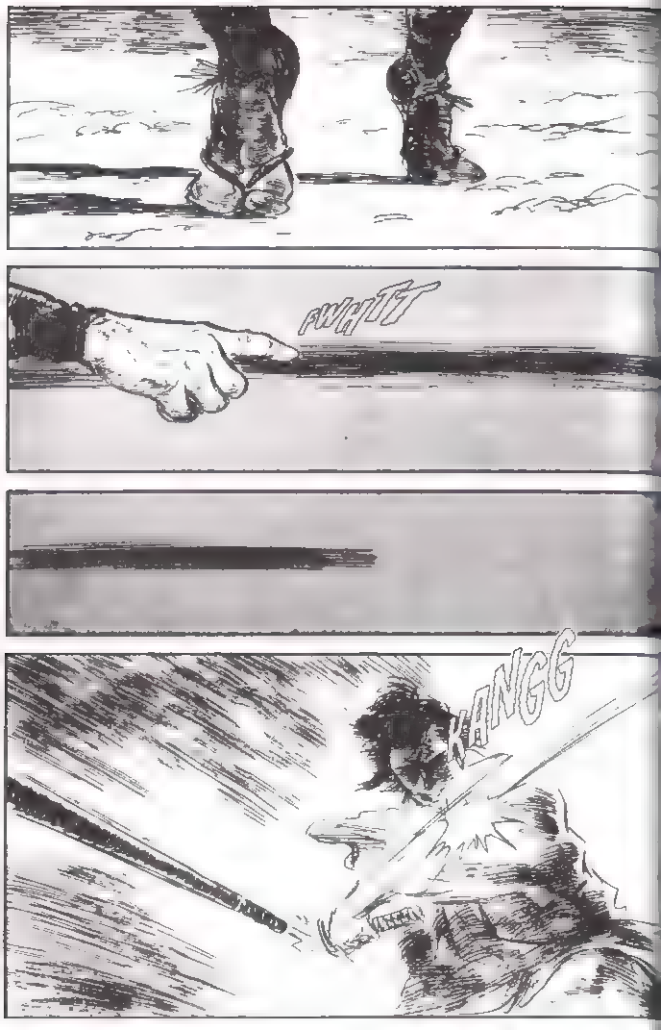


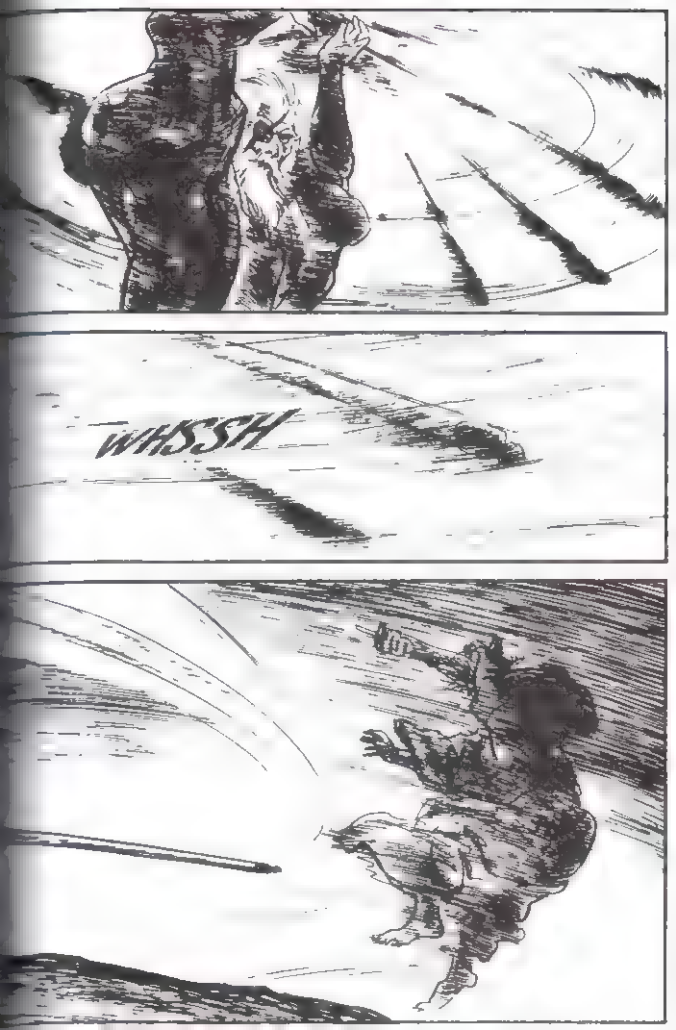









FWHIFF
KANGG

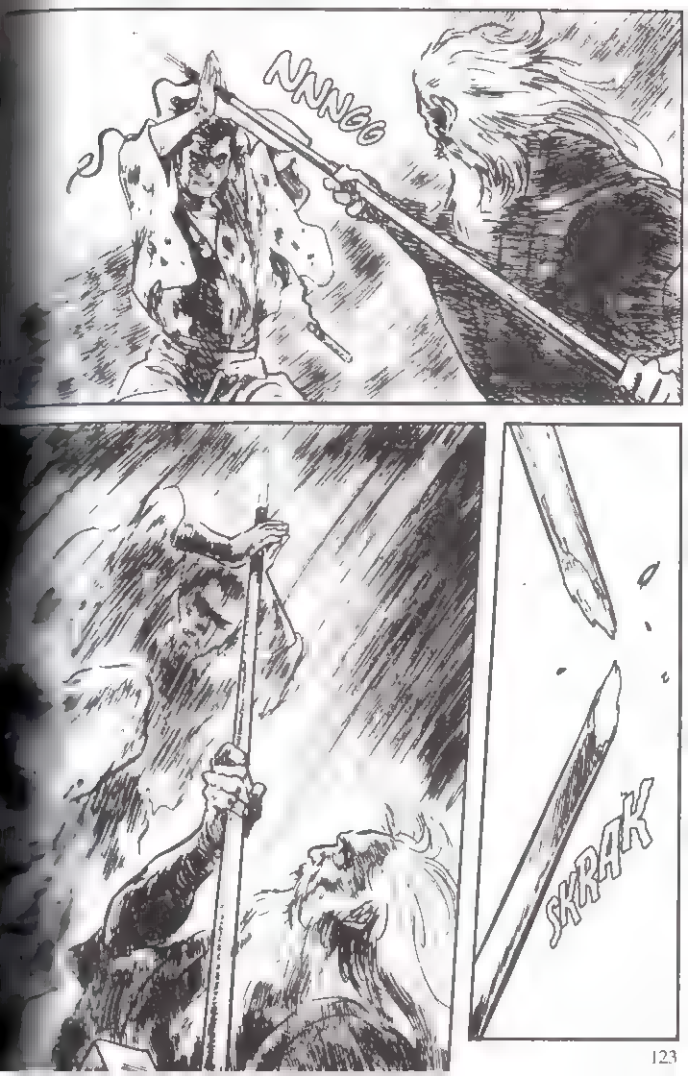

WHSSH

FWHIFF
KANG
KANG
KANG

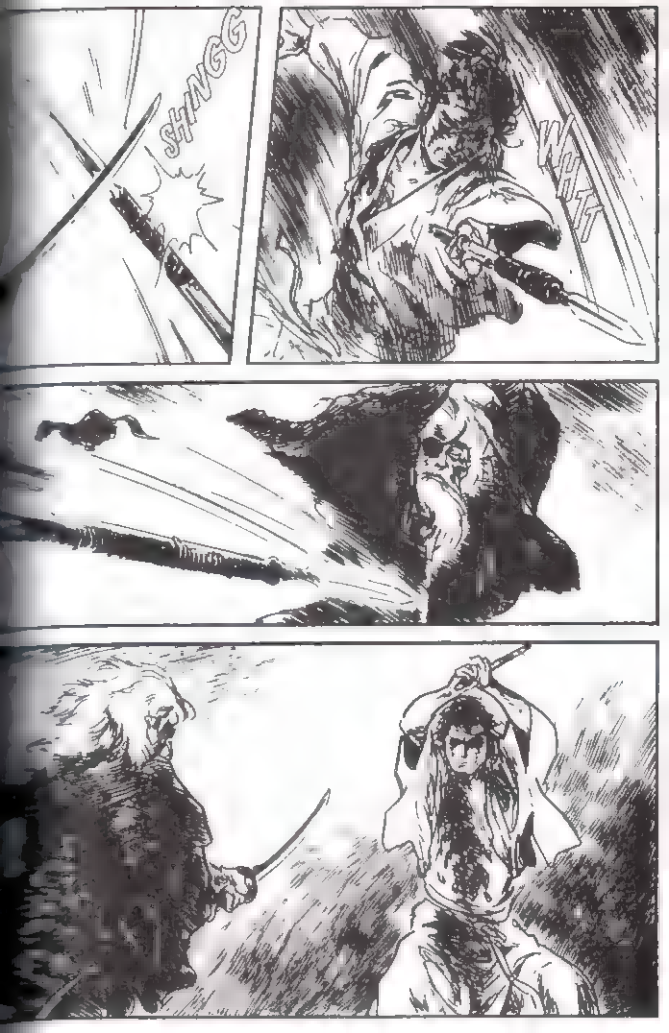
FHSSHH

WHIT
KSHING
RYAHH!

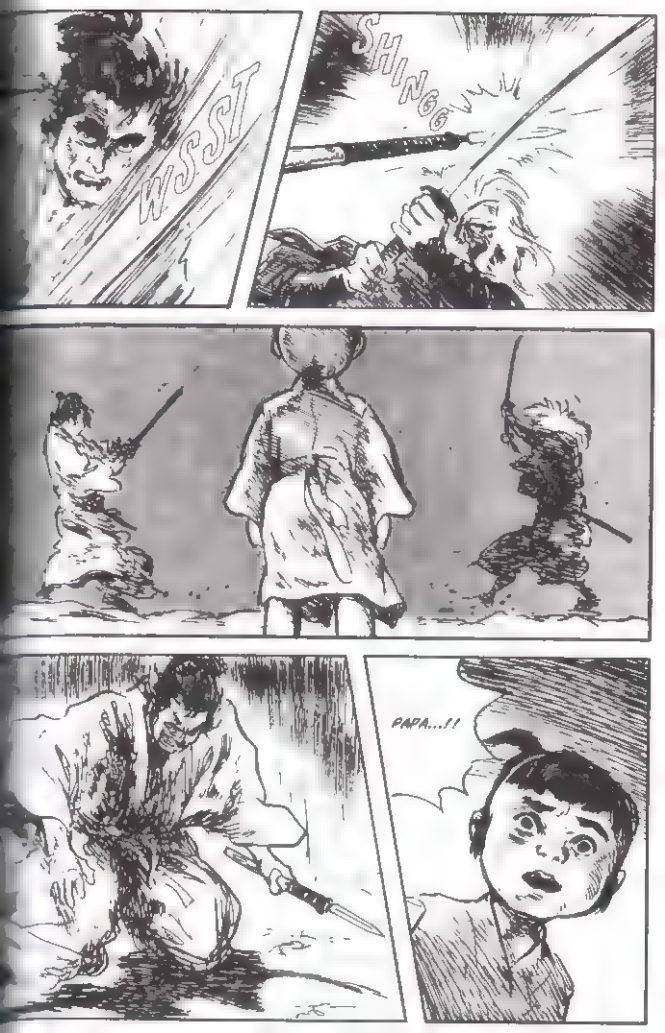
HRAGPY
SPEAR
CAPTURE!


NNNGG
SKRAK

KLAK
WHSSH


SHNGG
WHT

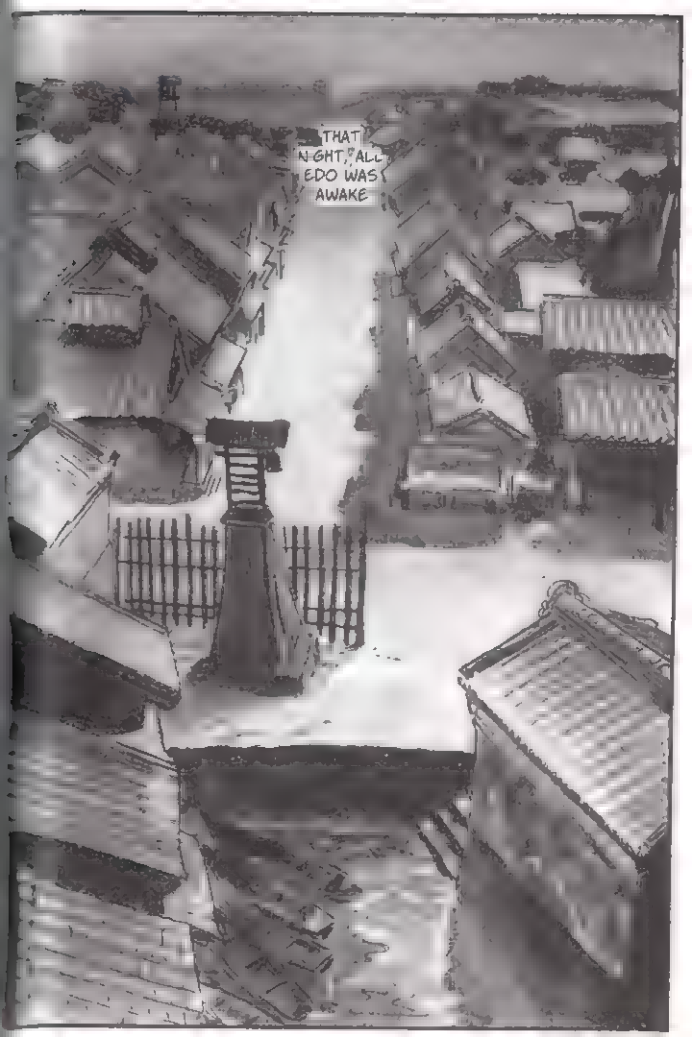
WHOOSH
KANG

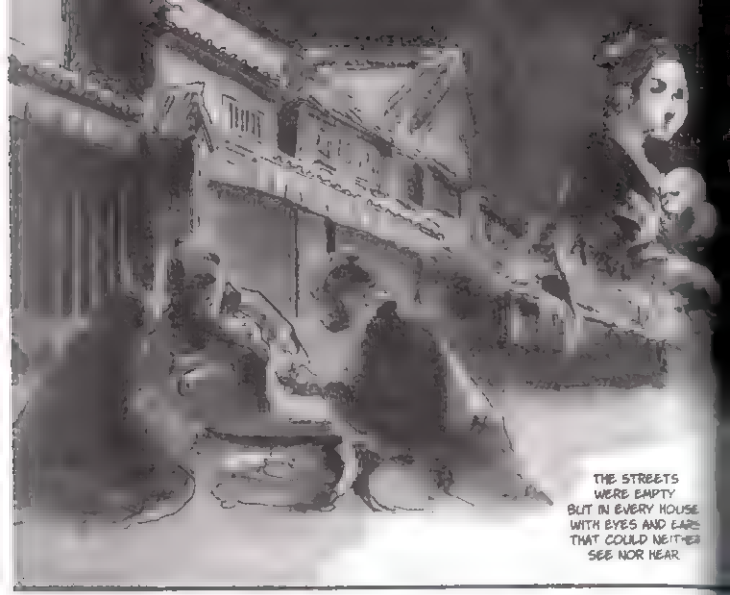

WSSSI
SHING
PAPA...!!

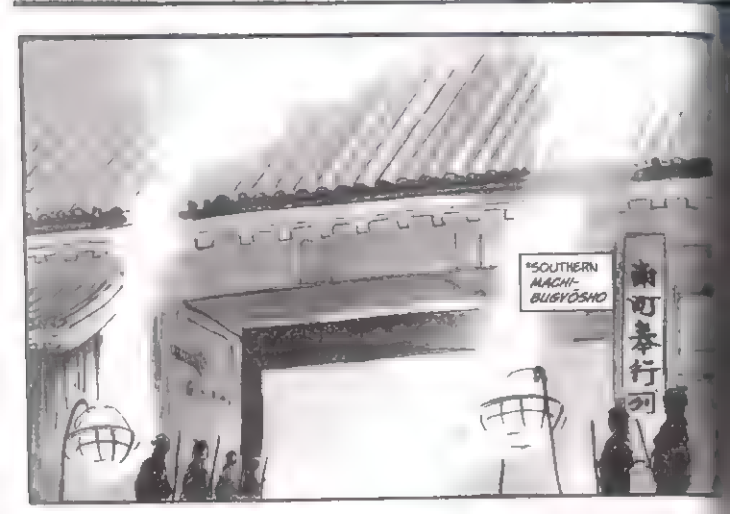
FWHTT

the hundred and fortieth

The Lotus Throne


THAT NIGHT, ALL EDO WAS AWAKE


THE STREETS WERE EMPTY BUT IN EVERY HOUSE WITH EYES AND EARS THAT COULD NEITHER SEE NOR HEAR

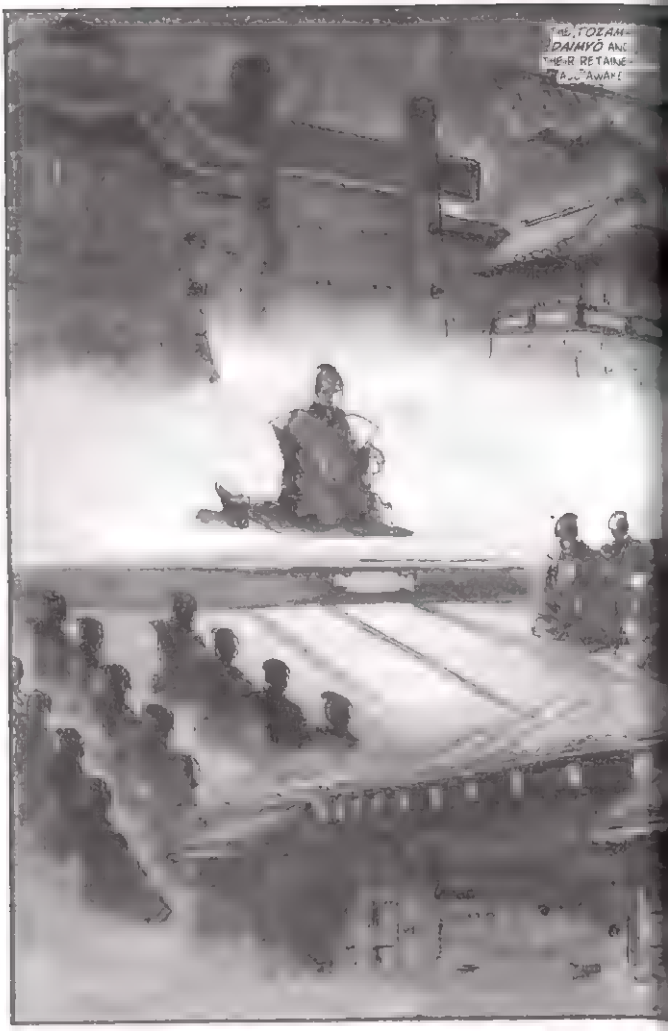

*SOUTHERN MACHI-BUGYŌSHO
南町奉行所

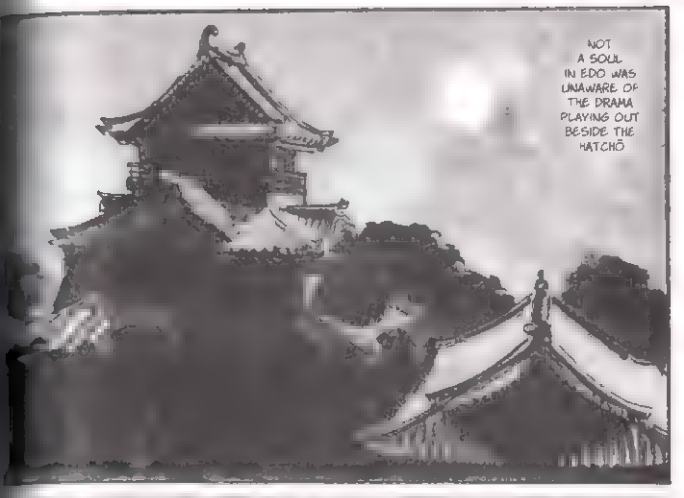
THE STREETS WERE EMPTY BUT IN EVERY HOUSE WITH EYES AND EARS THAT COULD NEITHER SEE NOR HEAR
THE PEOPLE FOLLOWED RN ON THE STRAND
*SOUTHERN MACHI-BUGYOSHO
南町奉行所
北町奉
*NORTHERN MACHI-BUGYOSHO

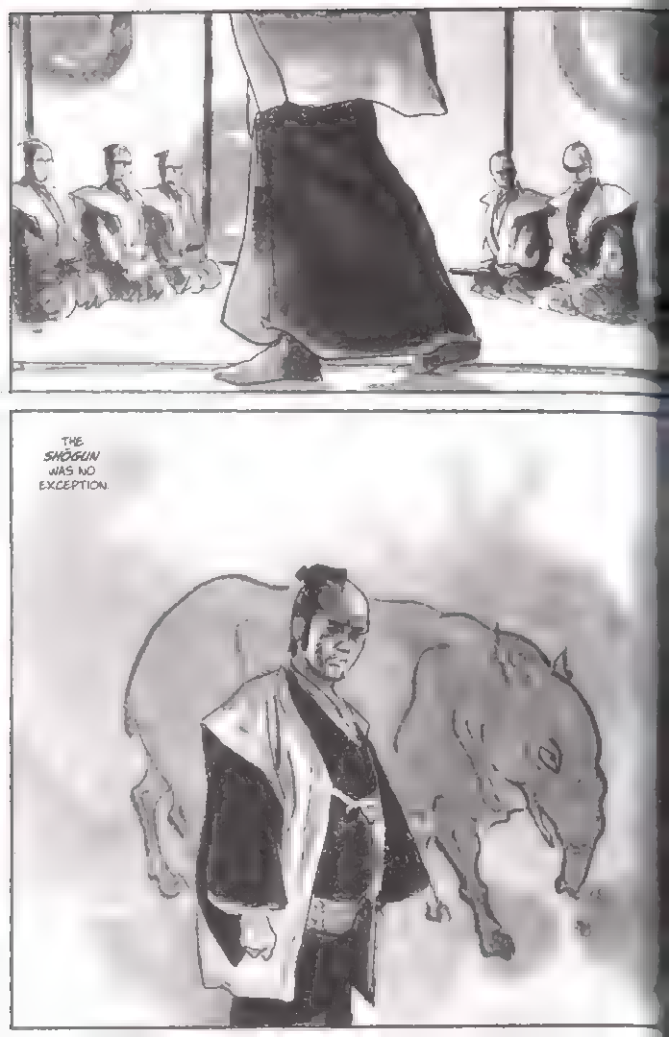
THE PEOPLE
FOLLOWED
TURN ON THE
STRAND

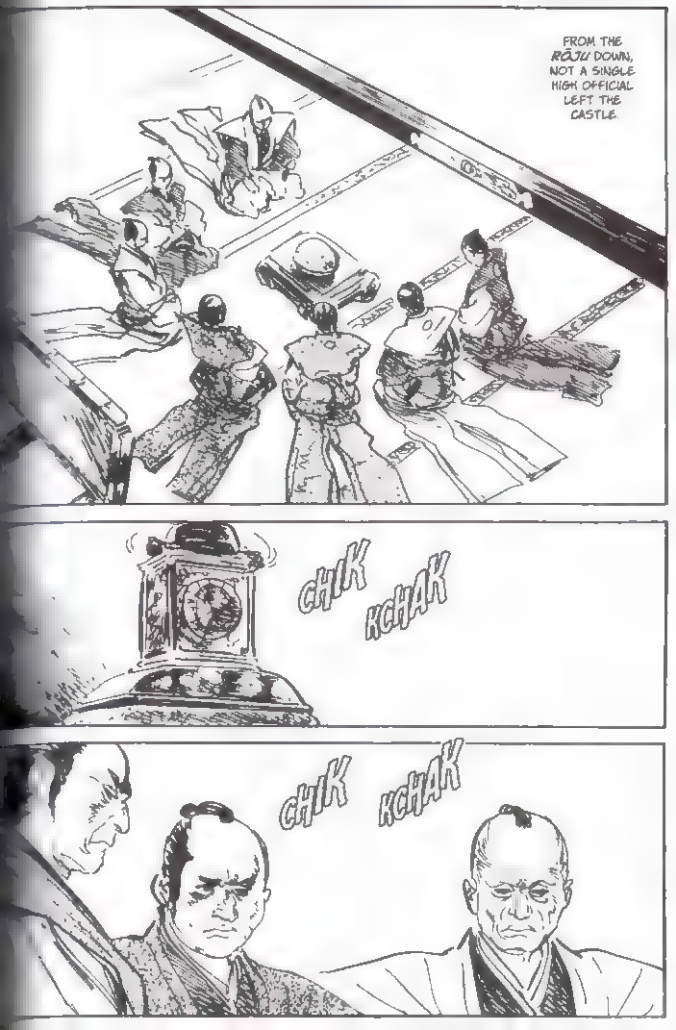
"NORTHERN
MACHI-
BUGYOSHO

THE MACA-
BUGYOSHI
WERE READ
TO MOVE
AN INSTAN


THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ AND THEIR RETAINERS AWAIT

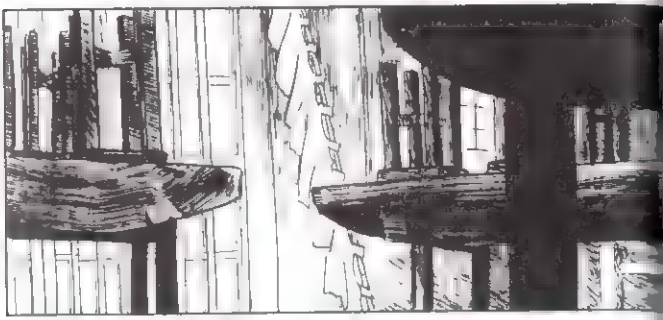

NOT A SOUL IN EDO WAS UNAWARE OF THE DRAMA PLAYING OUT BESIDE THE HATCHŌ


THE SHŌGUN WAS NO EXCEPTION


FROM THE RŌJŪ DOWN, NOT A SINGLE HIGH OFFICIAL LEFT THE CASTLE.
CHIK KCHAK
CHIK KCHAK

ALL EDO, FROM HIGH TO LOW, WAITED AS THOUGH TURNED TO STONE.
NONE WILLING TO RISK THE FIRST MOVE.
SHKK
FIRST, THE PEOPLE FROM THE THUNDER OF EXPLOSIVES ECHOING FROM THE HATCH AND THE TALES OF RETURNING POLICEMEN THEY INSTANTLY GRASPED WHAT WAS GOING ON..

AND
RAGE RACED
THROUGH THE
VILLAGE LIKE
WILDFIRE.



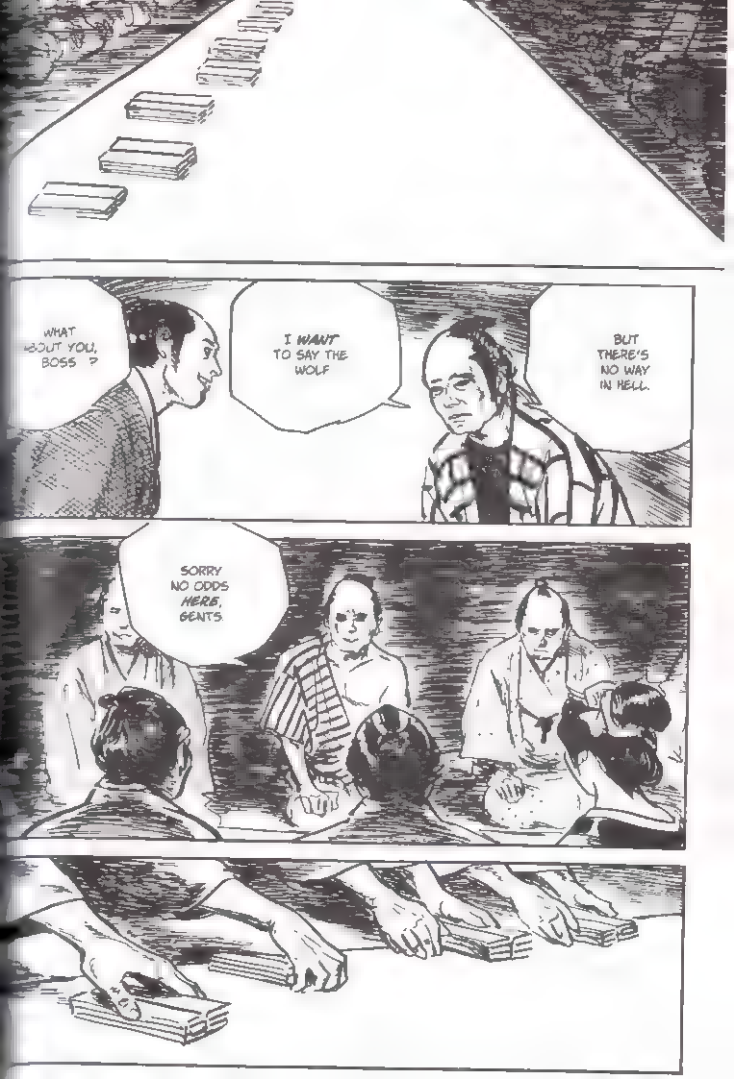
WHO'S GONNA WIN ?
YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ OF COURSE
YEAH. HE'S GOT TWO HUNDRED GUYS!
COME ON— A HUNDRED, AT MOST
AND ŌGAMI ITTŌ. JUST ONE WOLF .
DO NOT !
DON'T BE STUPID THE KID IS JUST GOING TO GET IN THE WAY

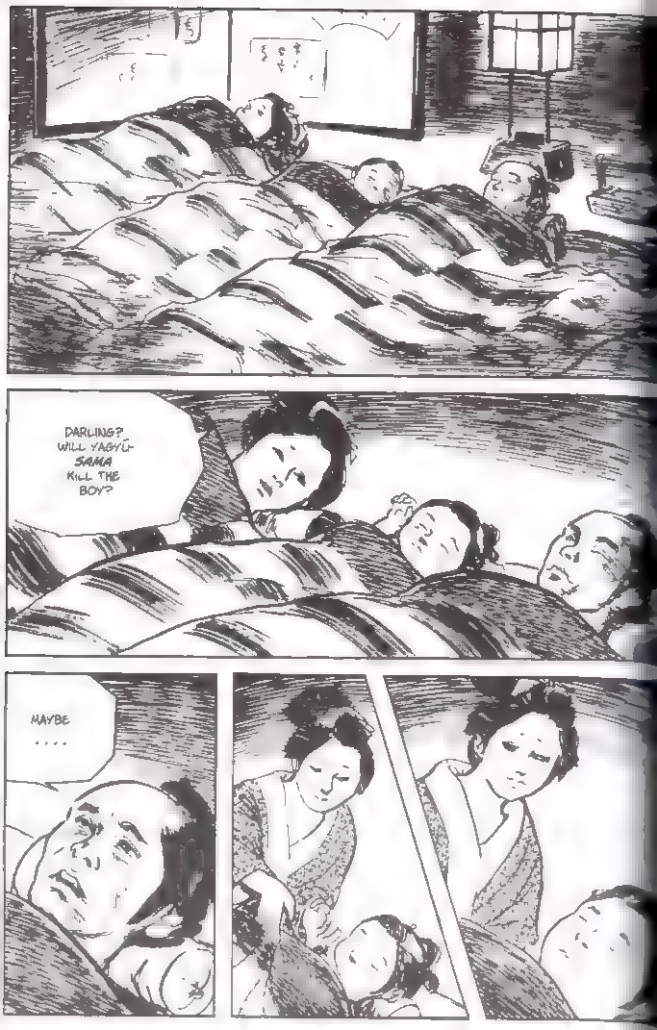
YAGYŪ BY A *MILE*.
A HUNDRED SWORD MASTERS FROM HIS CLAN. BOMB-THROWING *NINJA*... *FORGET* IT
IT'S NO CONTEST
I DON'T KNOW, PAL. WE'RE TALKING *LONE WOLF* HERE.

YAGYŪ BY A MILE.
A HUNDRED SWORD MASTERS FROM HIS CLAN. BOMB-THROWING NINJA .. FORGET IT
IT'S NO CONTEST
I DON'T KNOW, PAL WE'RE TALKING LONE WOLF HERE
OLD YAGYŪ'S TRIED TO NAIL 'IM BEFORE . WHAT A HUNDRED TIMES?
BUT HE CAN'T KILL THE WOLF!
HMM. I GOT DOUBT ALL OVER ?
MAYBE BUT WHO ?
I WONDER

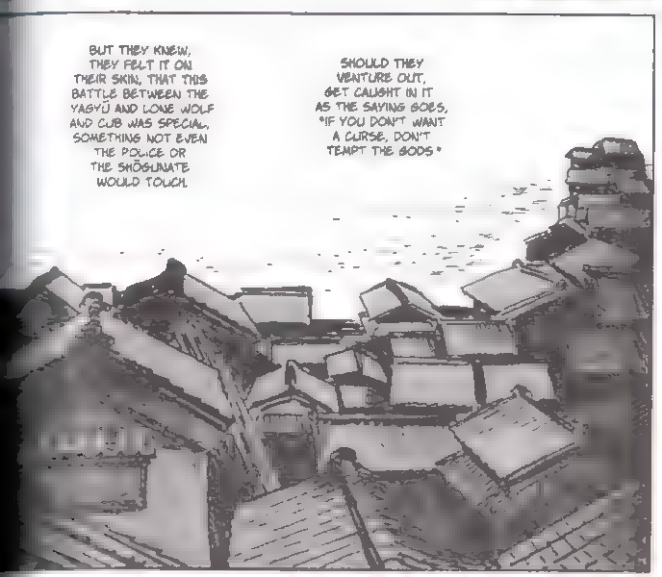
OLD YAGYŪ'S TRIED TO NAIL 'IM BEFORE. WHAT A HUNDRED TIMES?
BUT HE CAN'T KILL THE WOLF!
HMM. I GOT IT ALL WRONG?
MAYBE. BUT WHO?
I WONDER.

PLACE YOUR BETS, FOLKS?
ALL ON YAGYÛ-SAMA
ME, TOO
I'M IN.
ANY FOR LONE WOLF ?


WHAT ABOUT YOU, BOSS ?
I WANT TO SAY THE WOLF
BUT THERE'S NO WAY IN HELL.
SORRY NO ODDS HERE, GENTS


DARLING? WILL YAGYŪ-SAMA KILL THE BOY?
MAYBE ....

HAD IT BEEN A FIRE THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE DASHED OUTSIDE AND RUN FOR THE HATCHES


BUT THEY KNEW, THEY FELT IT ON THEIR SKIN, THAT THIS BATTLE BETWEEN THE YAGYŪ AND LONE WOLF AND CUB WAS SPECIAL, SOMETHING NOT EVEN THE POLICE OR THE SHŌGUNATE WOULD TOUCH.
SHOULD THEY VENTURE OUT, GET CAUGHT IN IT AS THE SAYING GOES, "IF YOU DON'T WANT A CURSE, DON'T TEMPT THE GODS."

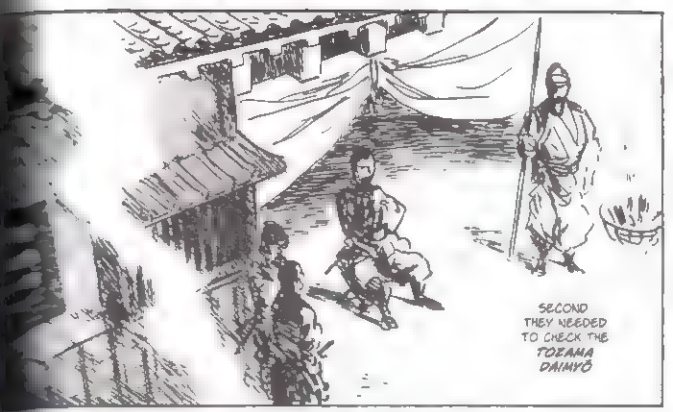
AS FOR THE MACHIKATA, THEIR POSITION WAS DELICATE INDEED
BUGYŌSHO

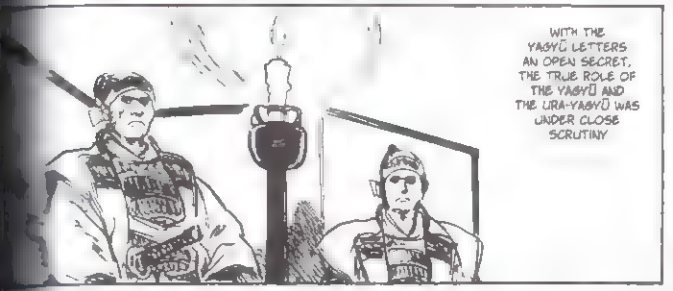
THE HATCHŌ STRADDLED THE MACHI-BUGYŌSHO'S JURISDICTION. THEIR DUTY WAS TO STOP VIOLENCE. AND YET..

THEIR POWER OF ARREST STOPPED
THE SAMURAI FAMILIES RŌNIN OR NO,
ŌGAMI ITTŌ WAS A SAMURAI
AND RETSUDŌ WAS A JIKISAN,
DIRECT RETAINER OF THE SHŌGUN
THE MACHIKATA COULD ONLY
WATCH FROM AFAR
'60-Y3
御用
御用
御用
御用
SHOULD THE FIGHTING
HURT THE INNOCENT,
THEN THEY COULD INTERVENE.
BUT THAT WAS UNLIKELY
AND RETSUDŌ HIMSELF HAD
WARNED THEM AWAY

THE JIKISAN HATAMOTO HAD THREE CONCERNS

ONE, IF RETSUDŌ WAS IN DANGER THEY HAD TO AID HIM. NOW THAT HE'D REGAINED THE TRUST OF THE SHŌGUN, SIDING WITH HIM WAS AN ACT OF LOYALTY TO THEIR LORD AND THE PATH TO PROMOTION.

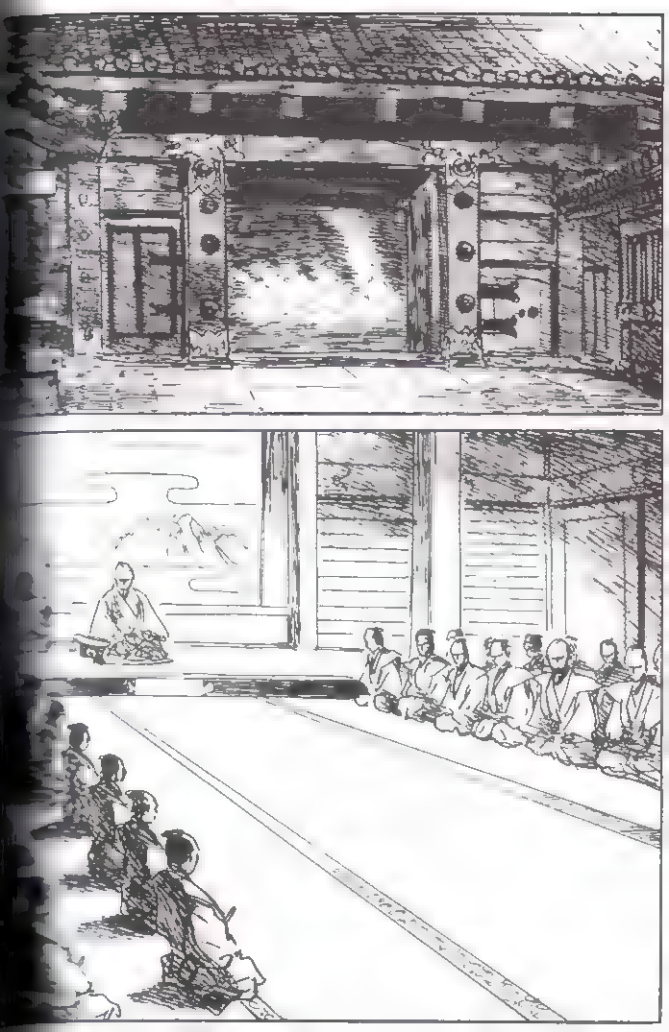

SECOND THEY NEEDED TO CHECK THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ

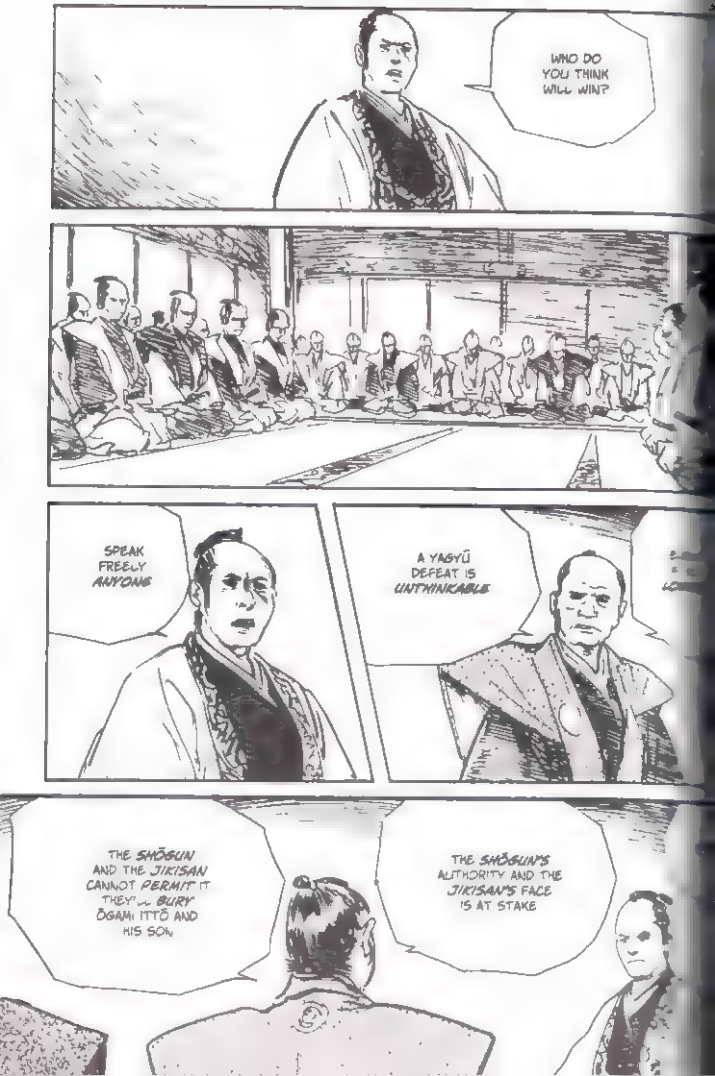

WITH THE YAGYŪ LETTERS AN OPEN SECRET, THE TRUE ROLE OF THE YAGYŪ AND THE URA-YAGYŪ WAS UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY

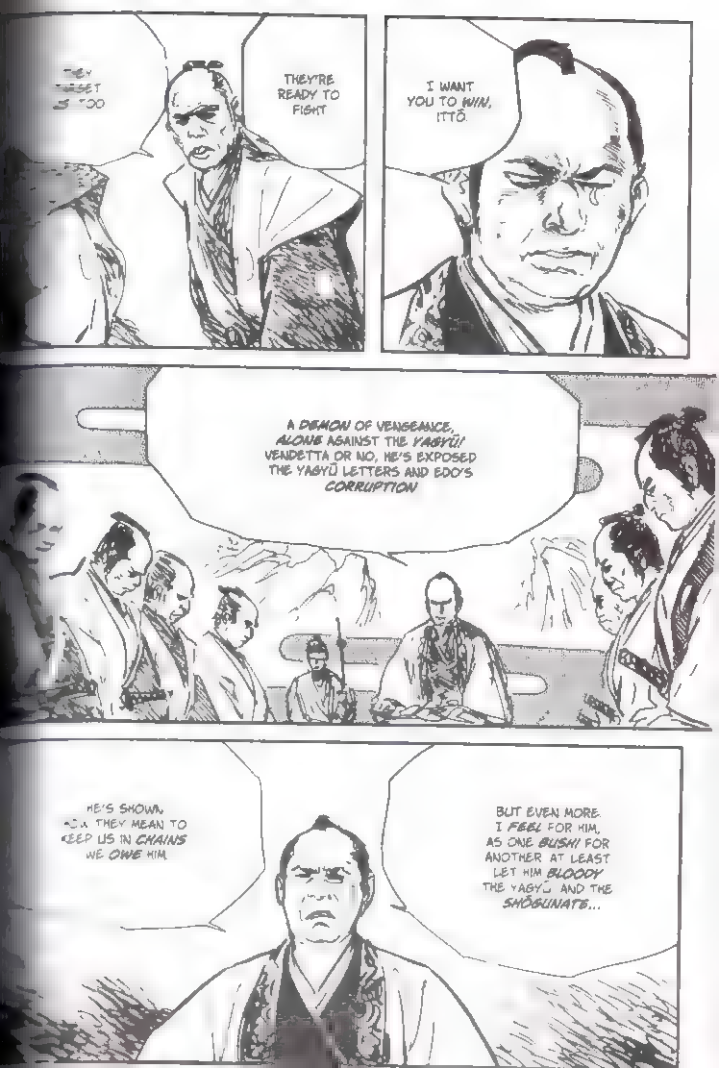
THE TOZAMA'S RESENTMENT AND SUSPICION TOWARD THE SHŌGUNATE MOUNTED BY THE DAY AND WITH IT, SYMPATHY FOR ŌSAMI. THE HATAMOTO HAD TO BLOCK ANY DAIMYŌ THAT BACKED ŌSAMI, AND TOOK UP ARMS AGAINST THE SHŌGUN!

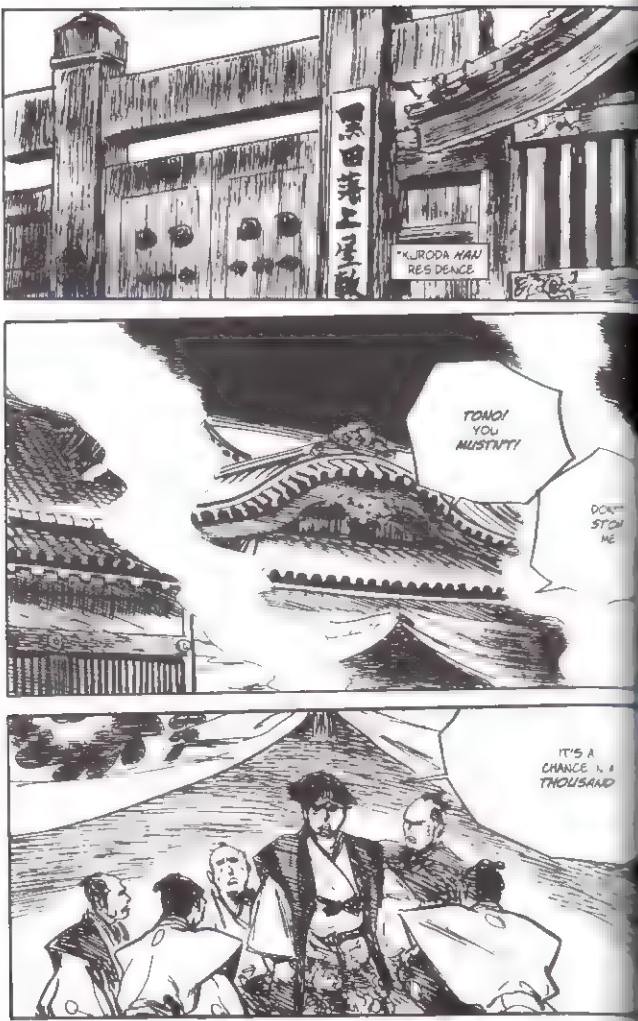
AND THUS,
THEIR LORD KNEW
NONE COULD KNOW IF
THE SHÔGUN WOULD
RIDE FOR THE HATCHO
BUT IF HE DID
THEY DARE'NT NOT
BE AT HIS SIDE.

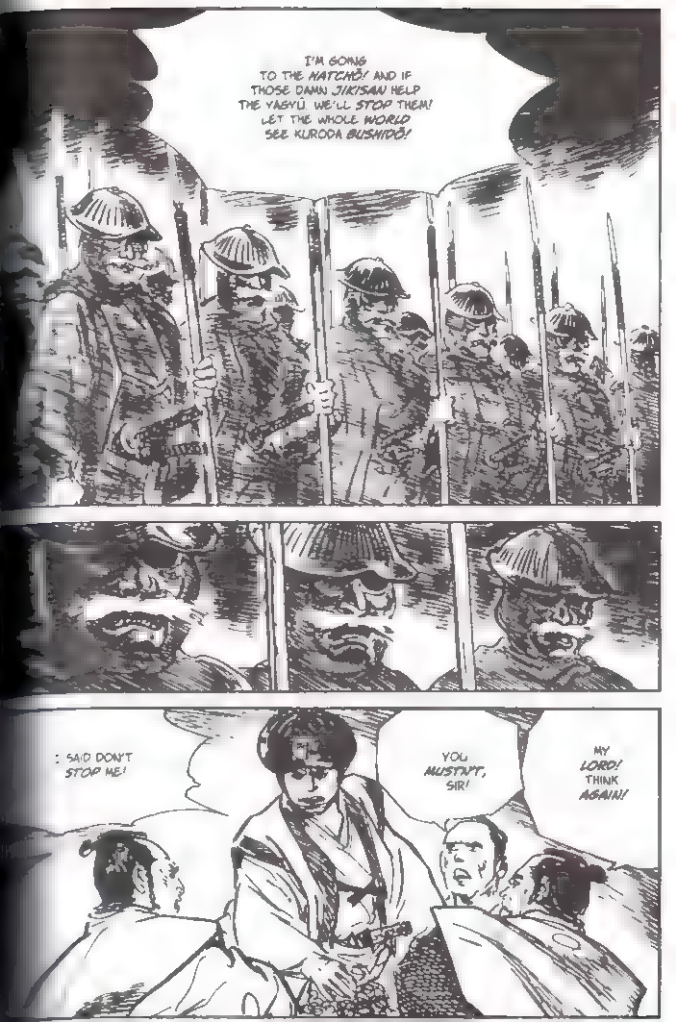
AND THUS
THE COMPOUNDS
OF THE HATAMOTO
THAT NIGHT WERE LIKE
ENCAMPMENTS BEFORE
A BATTLE

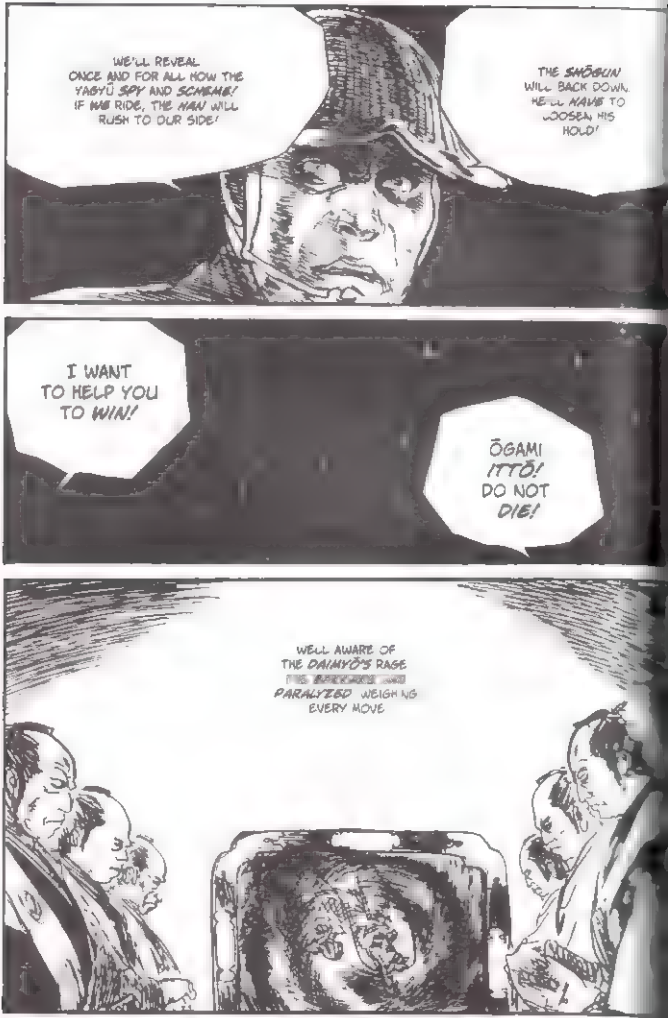



WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN?
SPEAK FREELY ANYONE
A YAGYŪ DEFEAT IS UNTHINKABLE
THE SHŌGUN AND THE JIKISAN CANNOT PERMIT IT THEY'LL BURY ŌGAMI ITTŌ AND HIS SON
THE SHŌGUN'S AUTHORITY AND THE JIKISAN'S FACE IS AT STAKE

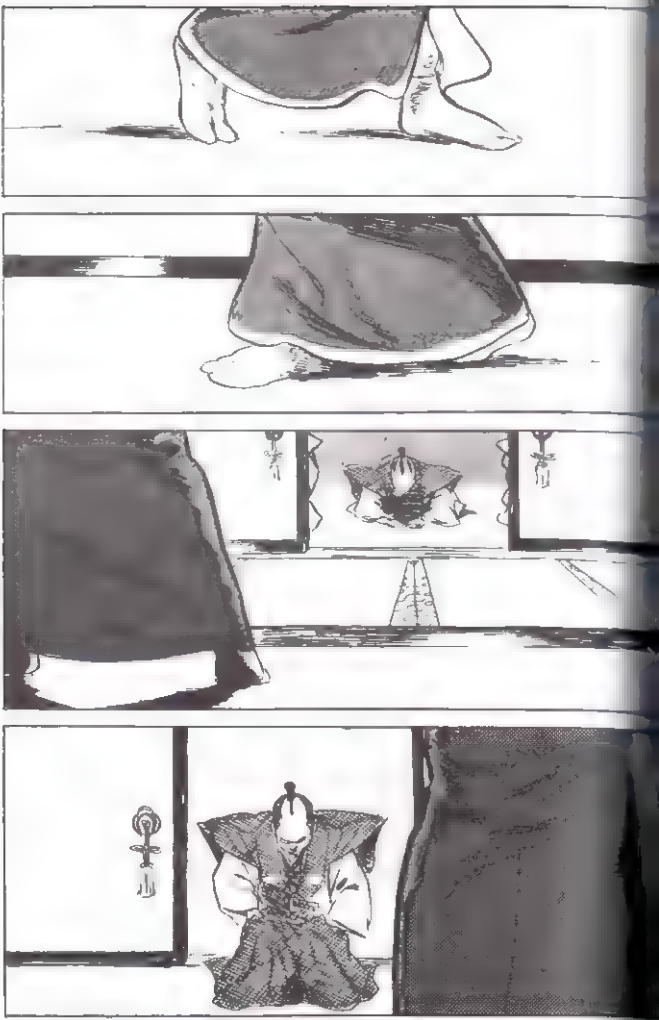

THEY INSIST IT TOO
THEY'RE READY TO FIGHT
I WANT YOU TO WIN, ITTŌ.
A DEMON OF VENGEANCE, ALONE AGAINST THE YAGYŪ! VENDETTA OR NO, HE'S EXPOSED THE YAGYŪ LETTERS AND EDO'S CORRUPTION
HE'S SHOWN, AS THEY MEAN TO KEEP US IN CHAINS WE OWE HIM.
BUT EVEN MORE I FEEL FOR HIM, AS ONE BUSHI FOR ANOTHER AT LEAST LET HIM BLOODY THE YAGYŪ AND THE SHŌGUNATE...


KURODA HAN RESIDENCE
TONO! YOU MUSTN'T!
DON'T STOP ME
IT'S A CHANCE IN A THOUSAND


I'M GOING TO THE HATCHŌ! AND IF THOSE DAMN JIKISAN HELP THE YABYŪ, WE'LL STOP THEM! LET THE WHOLE WORLD SEE KURODA BUSHIDŌ!
: SAID DON'T STOP ME!
YOU MUSTN'T, SIR!
MY LORD! THINK AGAIN!

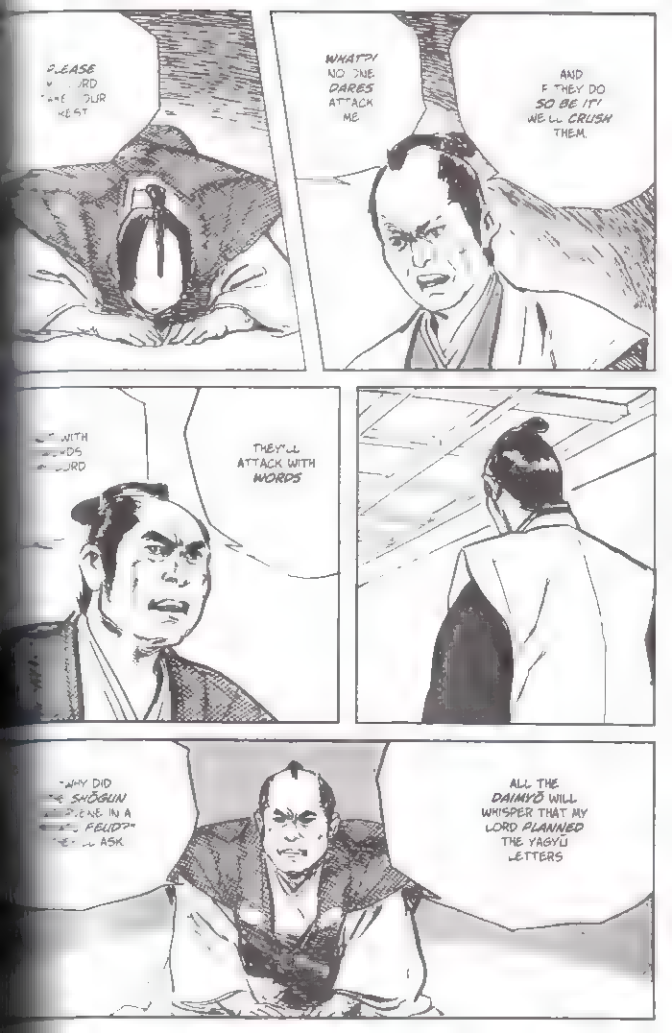

WE'LL REVEAL ONCE AND FOR ALL HOW THE YAGYŪ SPY AND SCHEME! IF WE RIDE, THE HAN WILL RUSH TO OUR SIDE!
THE SHŌGUN WILL BACK DOWN. HE'LL HAVE TO LOOSEN HIS HOLD!
I WANT TO HELP YOU TO WIN!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ! DO NOT DIE!
WELL AWARE OF THE DAIMYŌ'S RAGE
PARALYZED WEIGHING EVERY MOVE

THE SHŌGUN AS WELL
- HE MOVED SHIKISAN WOULD E AND THE OZAMA, TOO
TRAPPED AS THE DEADLOCKED EDO NIGHT WORE ON.
SET MACHI-BUGYŌ!



HOW GOES THE SCENE AT THE HATCHŌ?
SPEAK! DON'T YOU HAVE SPIES?!
I HUMBLY BEG MY LORD TO GO PEACEFULLY TO BED
WHAT ...?!

AS MY LORD WELL KNOWS, UNTIL HE SLEEPS THE GŌ-ROJŪ AND THE JIKISAN STAY ON HIGH ALERT
FULLY ARMED READY TO RIDE
THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ KNOW IT IF MY LORD GOES TO THE HATCHŌ THEY'LL TRY TO STOP HIM. THE SITUATION IS A TINDERBOX
BUT IF MY LORD SLEEPS, THE GŌ-ROJŪ LEAVE THE JIKISAN STAND DOWN, AND THE DAIMYŌ WATCH IN SILENCE


PLEASE
WHAT?!
NO ONE
DARES
ATTACK
ME.
AND
IF THEY DO
SO BE IT!
WE'LL CRUSH
THEM.
THEY'LL
ATTACK WITH
WORDS
ALL THE
DAIMYŌ WILL
WHISPER THAT MY
LORD PLANNED
THE YAGYŪ
LETTERS

THEY'LL DEMAND TO KNOW WHY SGAMI WAS DISBARRED, WHY HE FIGHTS YAGYU-SAMA IT'S PLAYING WITH FIRE MY LORD
THE DISBARMENTS HAVE THEM ON EDGE— COULD THEY BE NEXT? THEY'LL LATCH ONTO THIS, AND NEVER LET GO.
THE CORNERED RAT ATTACKS THE CAT MY LORD THEY'LL DEMAND YOU WEAKEN CONTROL
HEAR ME, MY LORD. PLEASE, SLEEP

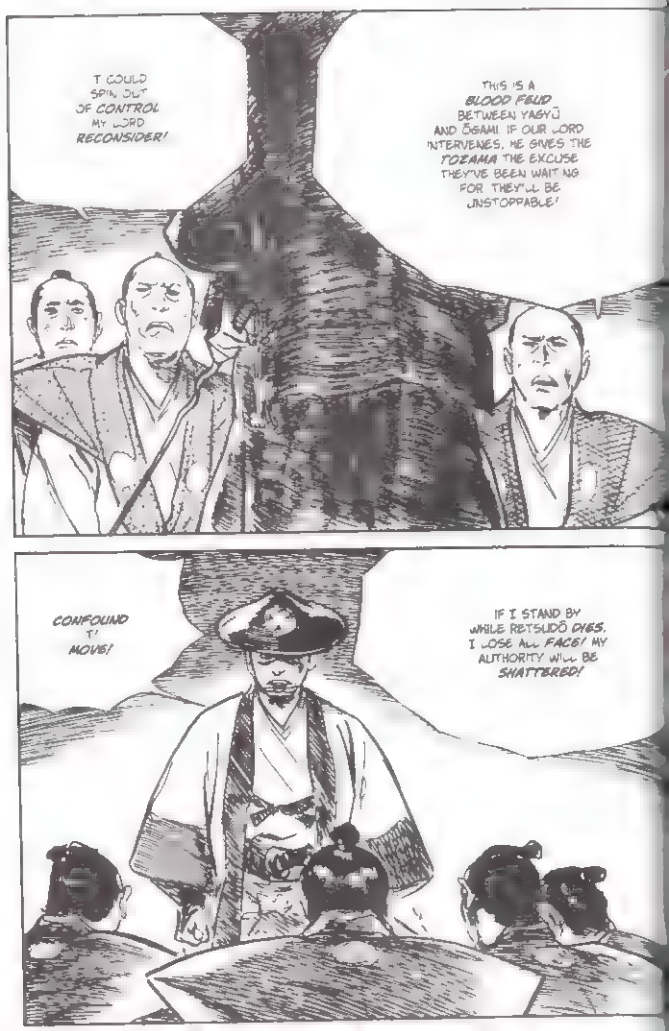
WHAT OF THE HATCHŌ?!
IT'S A PRIVATE FEUD, MY LORD!
TELL ME!!
SO BE IT
ISAMI HAS SLAUGHTERED THE YAGYŪ'S MEN.
RETSUDŌ-SAMA STANDS ALONE.
WHAT ...?!

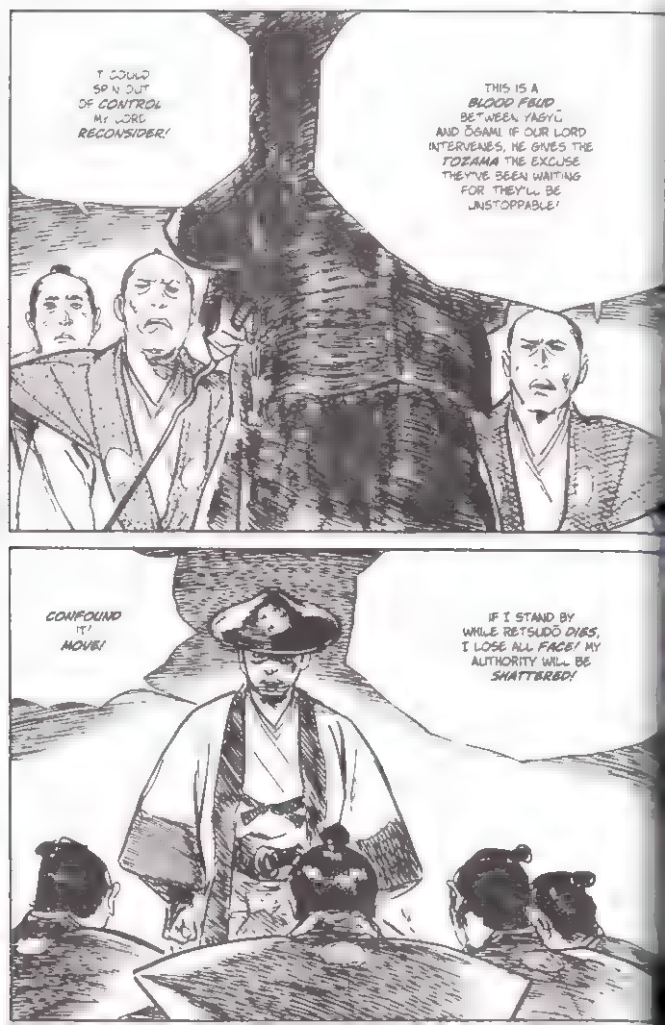
YET MY MEN REPORT THAT ŌGAMI'S SWORD IS BROKEN! BLOOD POURS FROM A MORTAL WOUND! IT'S ALL HE CAN DO TO STAND!
PERHAPS
AND YET
OGAMI WILL NOT FALL! HIS EYES BURN WITH DEMONIC LIGHT!

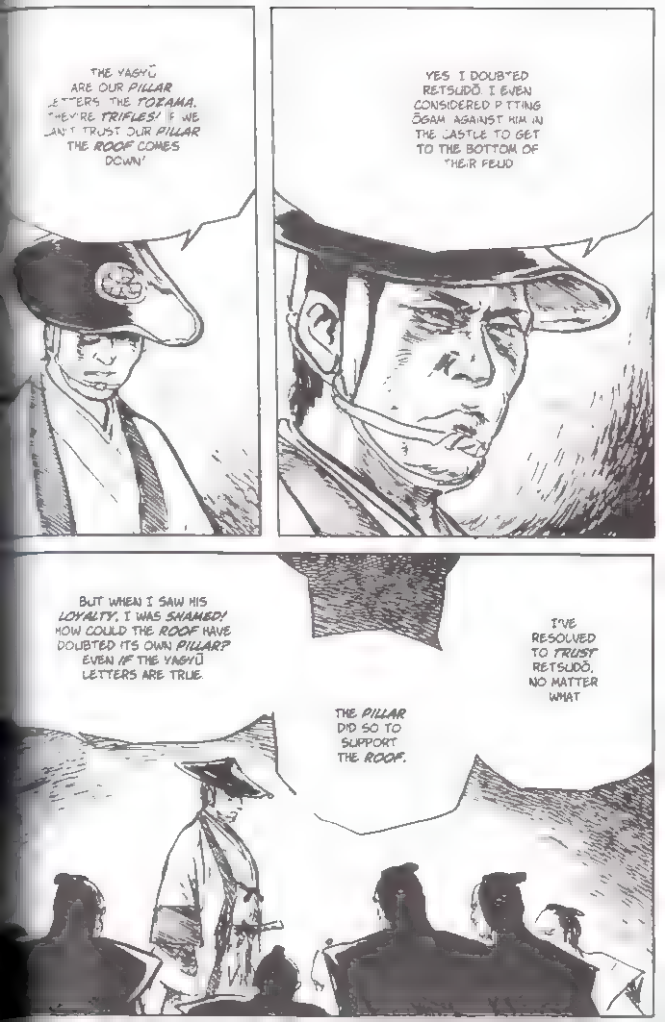
MY HORSE!
I'M GOING TO THE HATCHO!

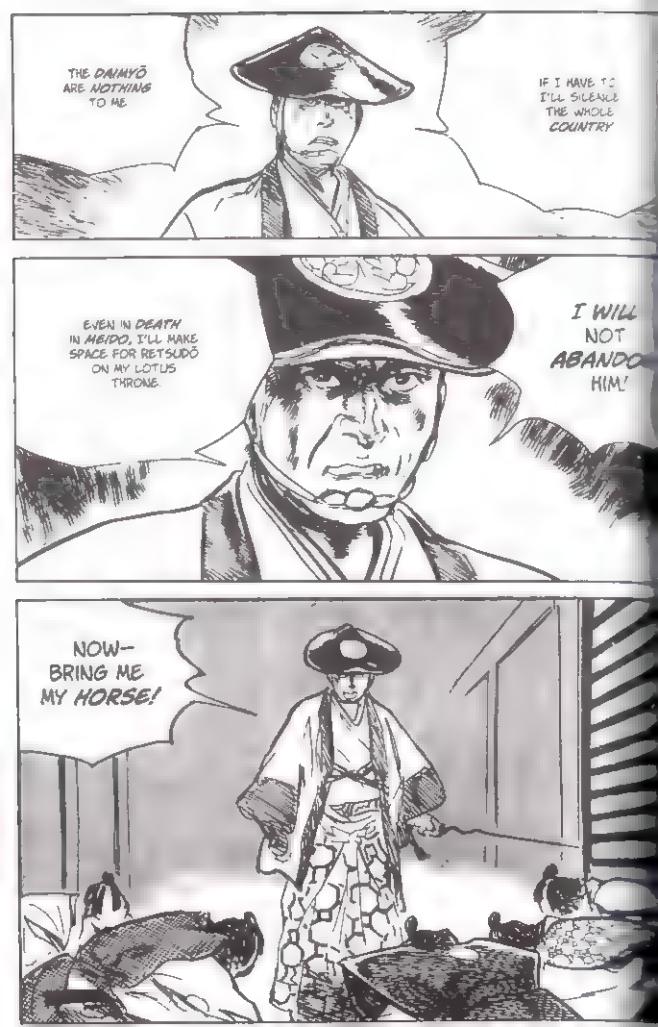
Th
Th
MY LORD!
I BEG YOU! RECONSIDER!
OUT OF MY WAY!!

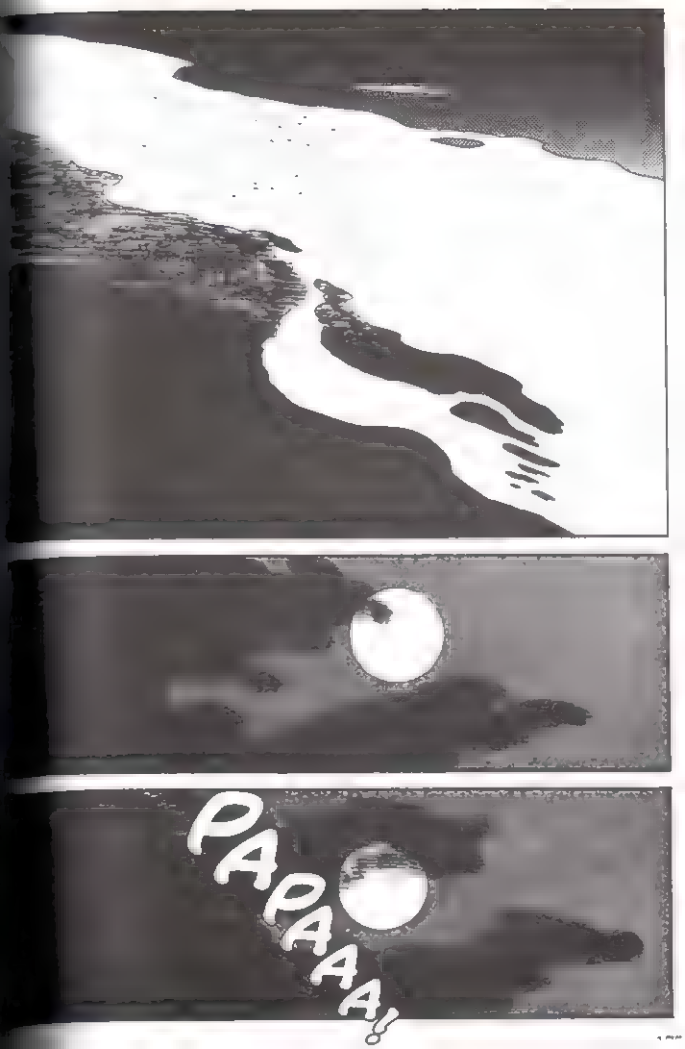
AH
SWOSH
"THIS WILL NOT STAND MY LORD!
IF YOU MOVE, THE JIKISAN MOVE, THE DAIMYŌ MOVE!
THE GO-SANKE CLANS RUSH IN. EDO WILL BE IN CHAOS!


I COULD SPIN OUT OF CONTROL MY LORD RECONSIDER!
THIS IS A BLOOD FEUD BETWEEN YAGYŪ AND ŌGAMI. IF OUR LORD INTERVENES, HE GIVES THE TOZAMA THE EXCUSE THEY'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. THEY'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE!
CONFOUND IT! MOVE!
IF I STAND BY WHILE RETSUDŌ DIES, I LOSE ALL FACE! MY AUTHORITY WILL BE SHATTERED!


IT COULD SPIN OUT OF CONTROL MY LORD. RECONSIDER!
THIS IS A BLOOD FEUD BETWEEN YAGYŪ AND ŌGAMI. IF OUR LORD INTERVENES, HE GIVES THE TOZAMA THE EXCUSE THEY'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. THEY'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE!
CONFOUND IT! MOVE!
IF I STAND BY WHILE RETSUDŌ DIES, I LOSE ALL FACE! MY AUTHORITY WILL BE SHATTERED!


THE YASHÜ ARE OUR PILLAR LETTERS THE TOZAMA. THEY'RE TRIFLES! IF WE CAN'T TRUST OUR PILLAR THE ROOF COMES DOWN!
YES I DOUBTED RETSUDÖ. I EVEN CONSIDERED PITTING ÖGAM AGAINST HIM IN THE CASTLE TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THEIR FEUD
BUT WHEN I SAW HIS LOYALTY, I WAS SHAMED! HOW COULD THE ROOF HAVE DOUBTED ITS OWN PILLAR? EVEN IF THE YASHÜ LETTERS ARE TRUE.
I'VE RESOLVED TO TRUST RETSUDÖ, NO MATTER WHAT
THE PILLAR DID SO TO SUPPORT THE ROOF.

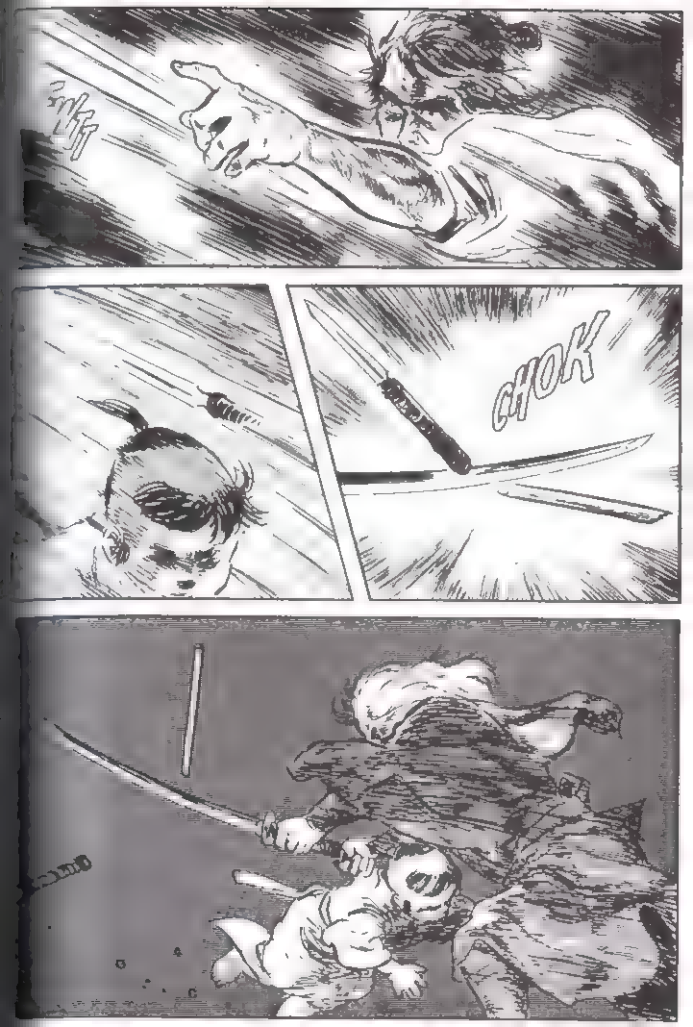

THE DAIMYŌ ARE NOTHING TO ME
IF I HAVE TO I'LL SILENCE THE WHOLE COUNTRY
EVEN IN DEATH IN MEIDO, I'LL MAKE SPACE FOR RETSUDŌ ON MY LOTUS THRONE
I WILL NOT ABANDON HIM!
NOW— BRING ME MY HORSE!

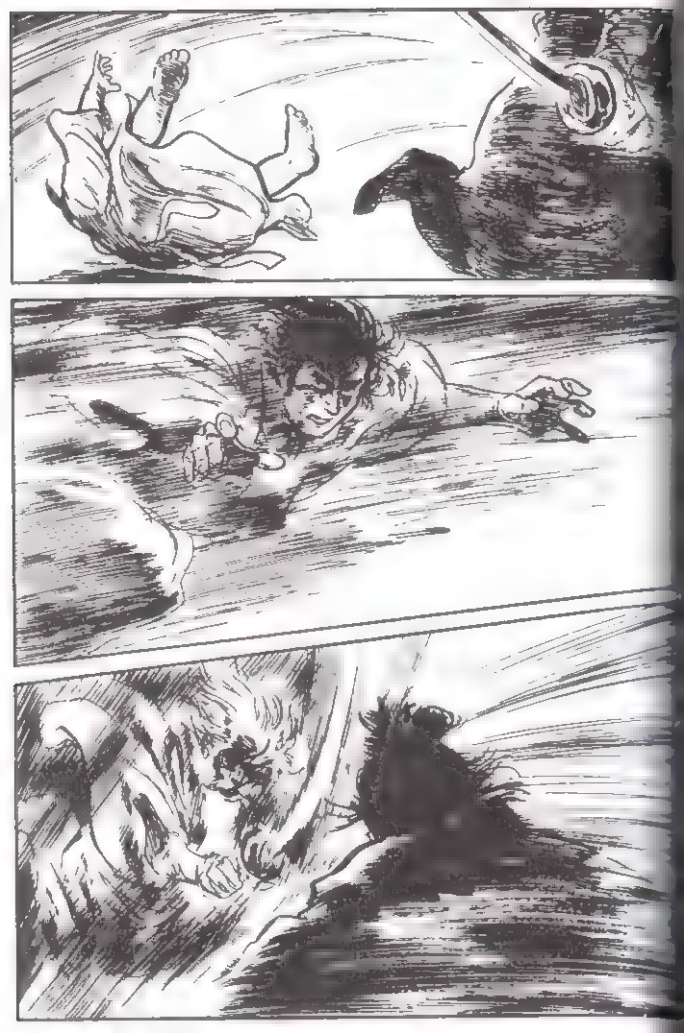

PAPAAA!

RYAAAAH!

FHTT
WHSSH

HYAAAAH!


CHOK



THAP

ITTŌ!
I'M NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD, BUT I HAVE THINGS TO DO!

ITTŌ!
I'M NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD, BUT I HAVE THINGS TO DO!
I MUST REPLANT THE TREE YOU UPROOTED! THE PILLAR OF THE TOKUGAWA!
UNTIL THEN, I CAN'T GIVE YOU THIS LIFE!

I MUST REPLANT THE TREE YOU UPROOTED! THE PILLAR OF THE TOKUGAWA!
UNTIL THEN, I CAN'T GIVE YOU THIS LIFE!

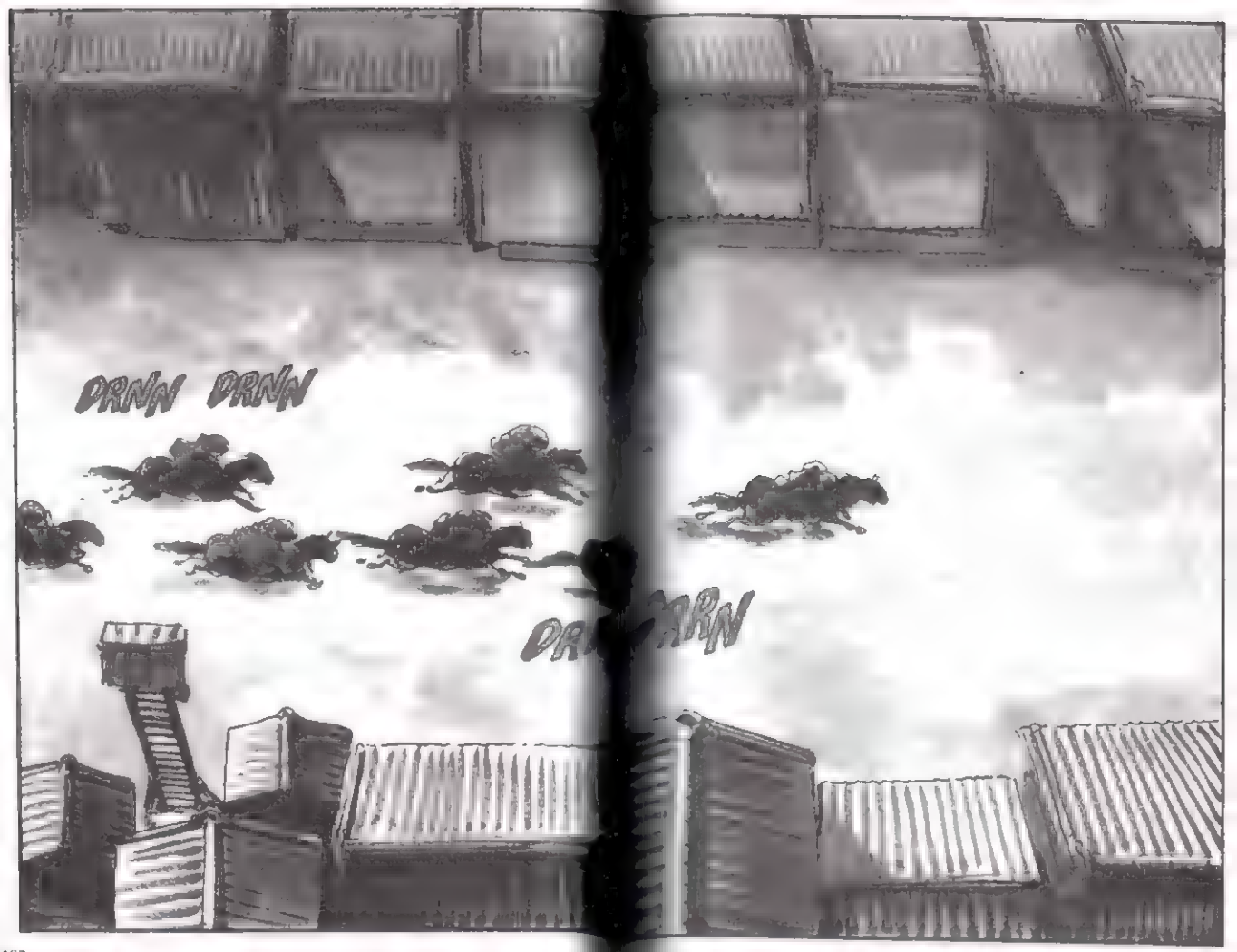
GO ON AHEAD, AND SAVE ME A PLACE ON THE LOTUS THRONE! WE'LL SETTLE THIS *THERE!*
NO, *RETSUDŌ!* *YOU* SAVE A PLACE FOR *ME!*

The hundred and forty-first

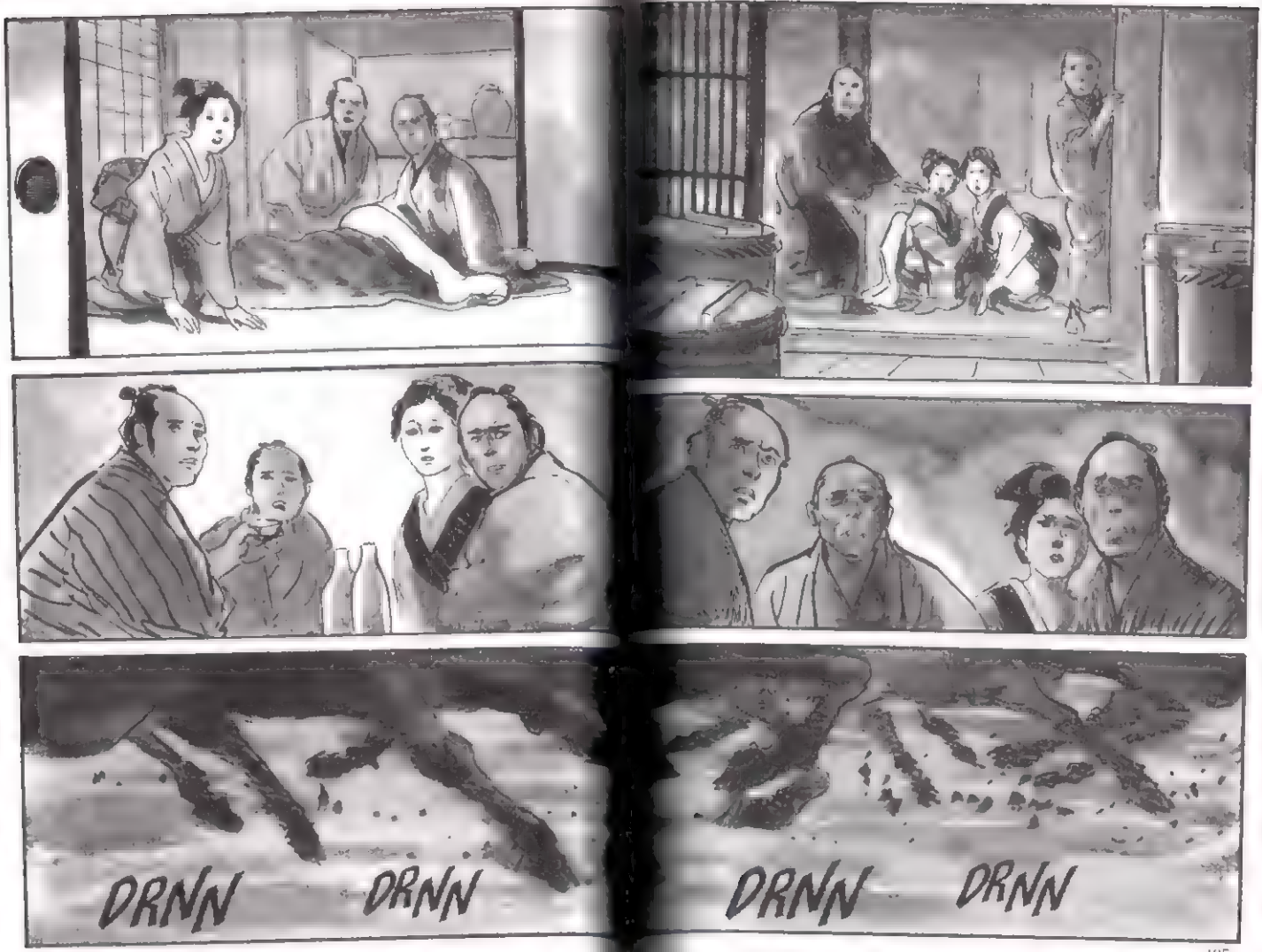
Empty Stirrups

E SHŌGUN
D MOVED
AST.

DRNN DRNN


DRNN DRNN

DRNN
DRNN


DRNN
DRNN
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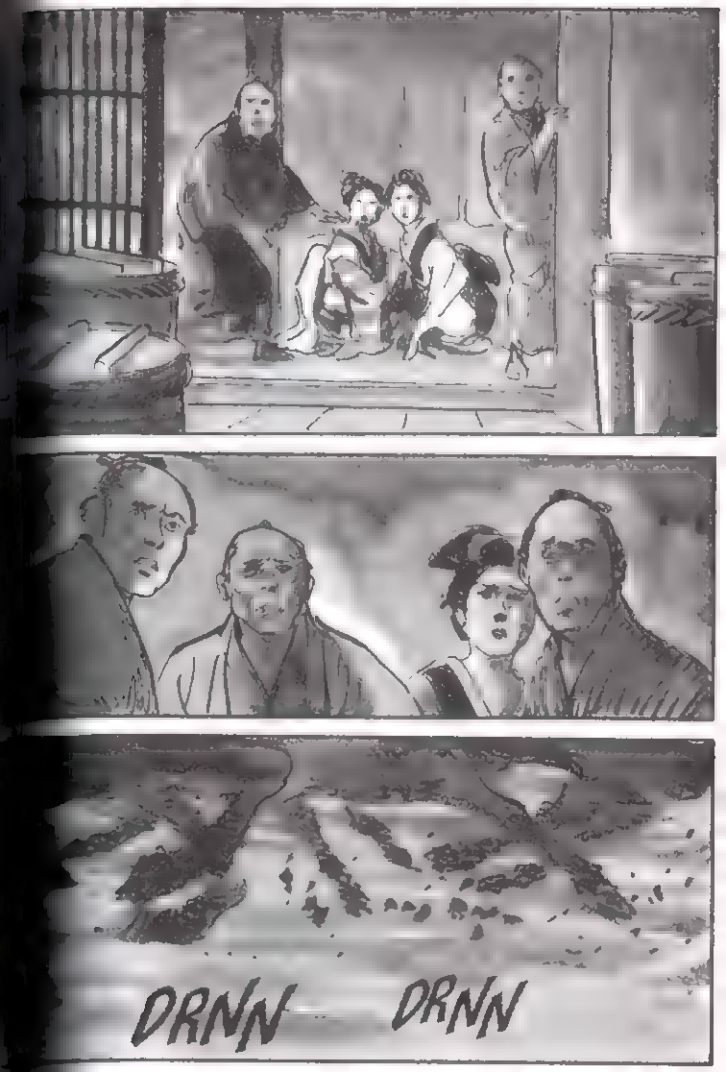
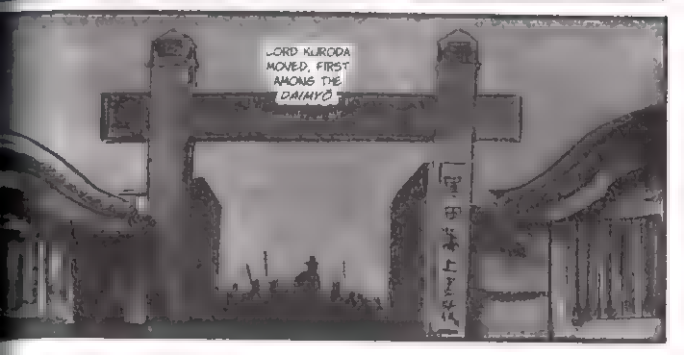

DRNN
DRNN

NATURALLY, THE MACHIKATA DEPLOYED IN FORCE

THE
ESH
IT'S
OLLOW"
ES THE

EISAN
D TO BE
TO THE


LORD KURODA
MOVED, FIRST
AMONG THE
DAIMYŌ

SHIMAZU *HAN* FOLLOWED TO STOP THEM, THE *GO-SANKE* RUSHED FOR THE RIVER

BATTLE WAS WRITTEN IN THE CLOUDS

NRNN
DRNN
DRNN

御用
御用
御用
御用
御用
御用
御用

御用
御用
御用

御用 御用 御用

"THE RUMORS ABOUT THE YAGYŪ LETTERS MUST BE *TRUE*. THE SHŌGUNATE HAS ASKED YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ TO SUPPRESS US!"
"HOW DARE THE YAGYŪ, A MERE VASSAL, MAKE HIS MASTER AID HIM IN A PRIVATE FEUD?"

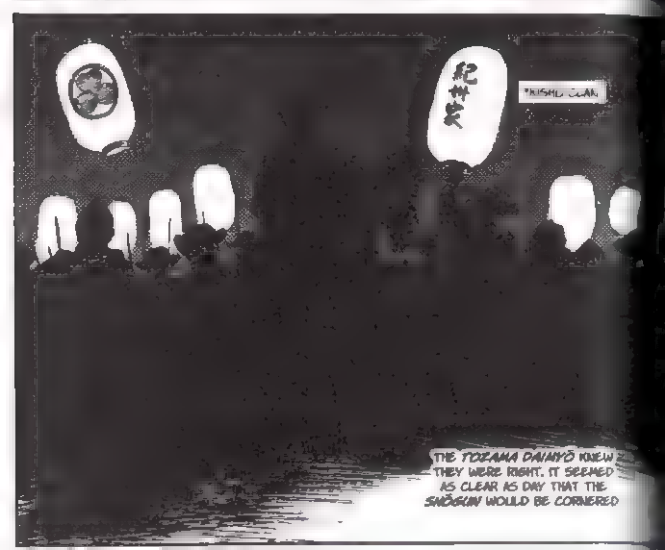
"THE RUMORS ABOUT THE YAGYŪ LETTERS MUST BE *TRUE*. THE SHŌGUNATE HAS ASKED YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ TO SUPPRESS US!"
DOES RIDE NOW E HIM?
"HOW DARE THE YAGYŪ, A MERE VASSAL, MAKE HIS MASTER AND HIM A PRIVATE FEUD?"
"DOES THIS NOT SHOW THAT THE *SHŌGUN* IS NOW THE YAGYŪS PUPPET?"

DOES
RIDE NOW
E HIM?
"DOES THIS NOT SHOW THAT THE SHŌGUN IS NOW THE YAGYŪS PUPPET?

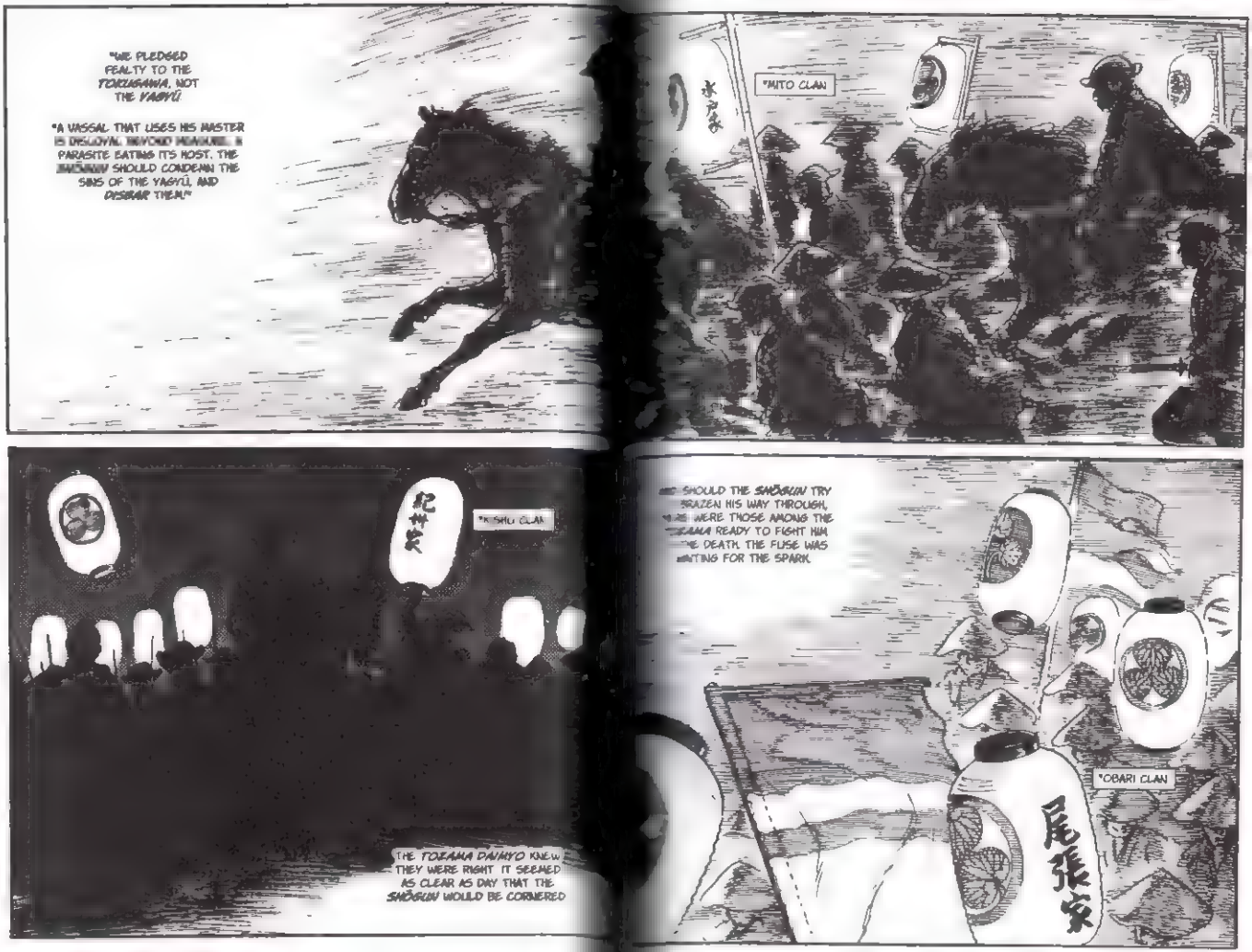
THE PLEDGED FEALTY TO THE TENSHŌSHOGUN, NOT THE YAGYŪ.

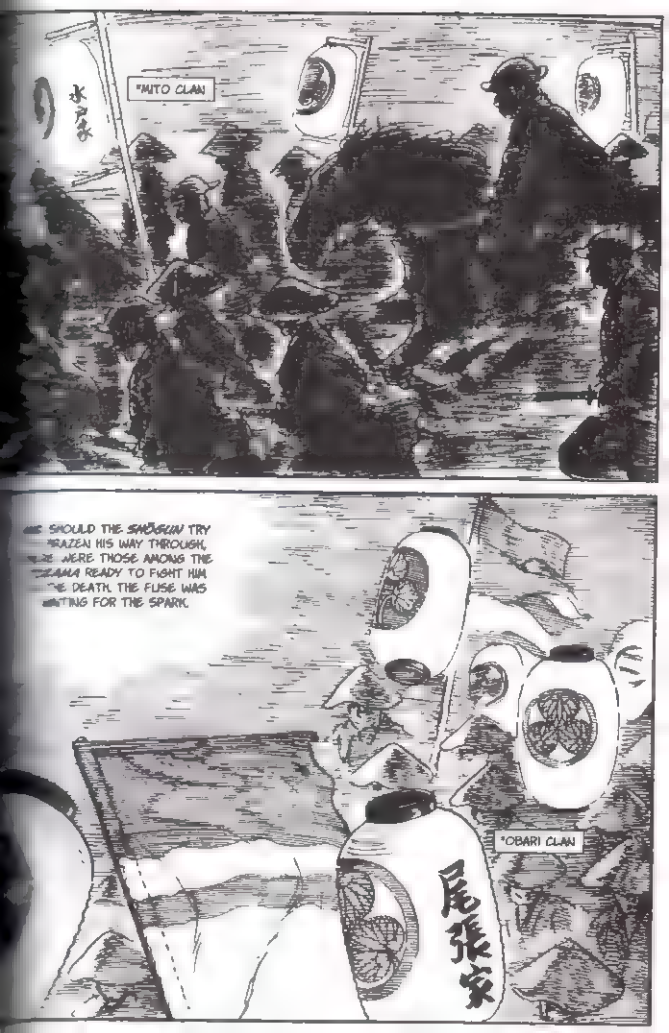
"A VASSAL THAT USES HIS MASTER IS DISLOYAL BEYOND MEASURE. A PARASITE EATING ITS HOST. THE SHŌGUN SHOULD CONDEMN THE SINS OF THE YAGYŪ, AND DISGRACE THEM."

"RISHU CLAN.

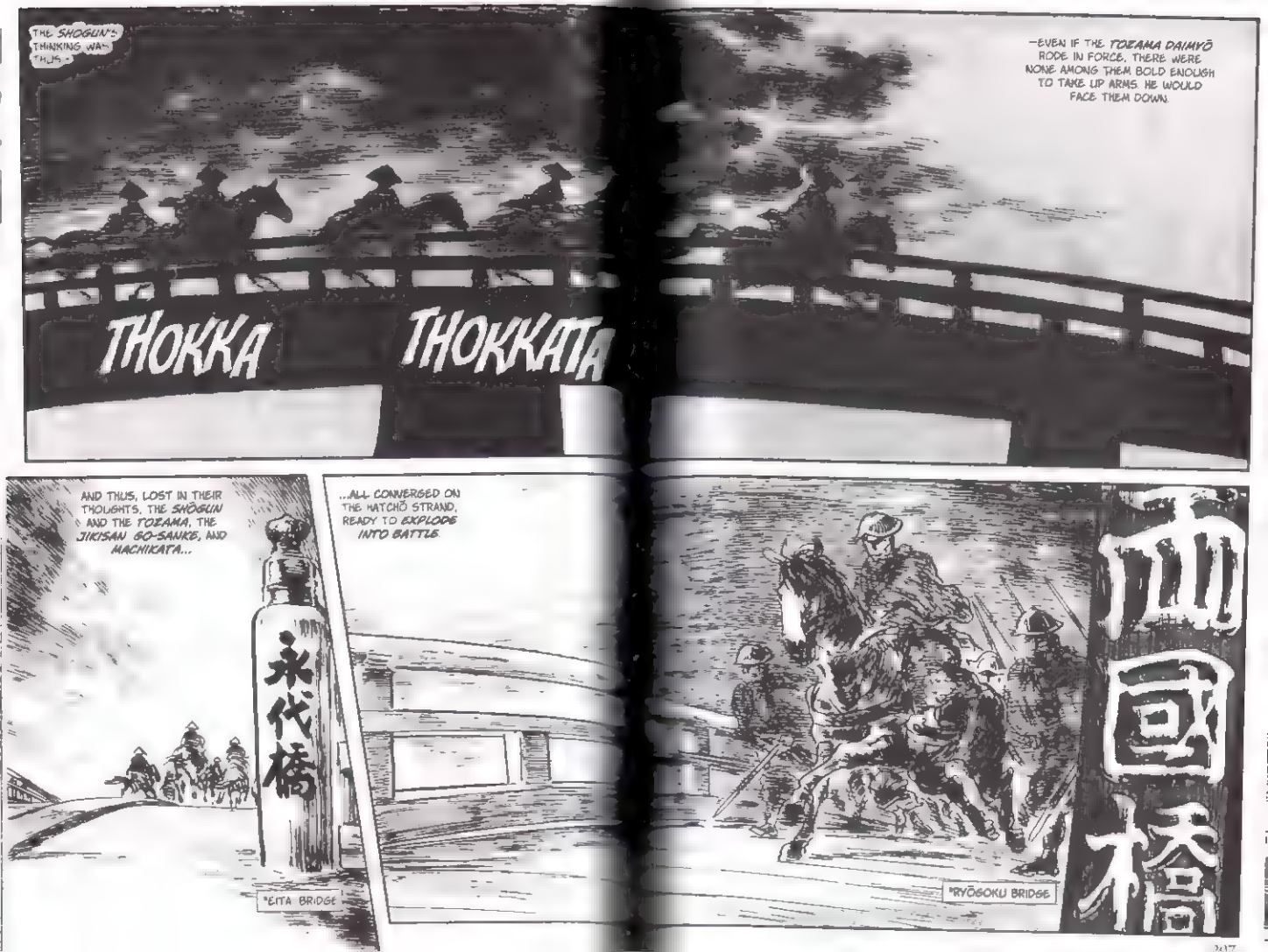


THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ KNEW THEY WERE RIGHT. IT SEEMED AS CLEAR AS DAY THAT THE SHŌGUN WOULD BE CORNERED

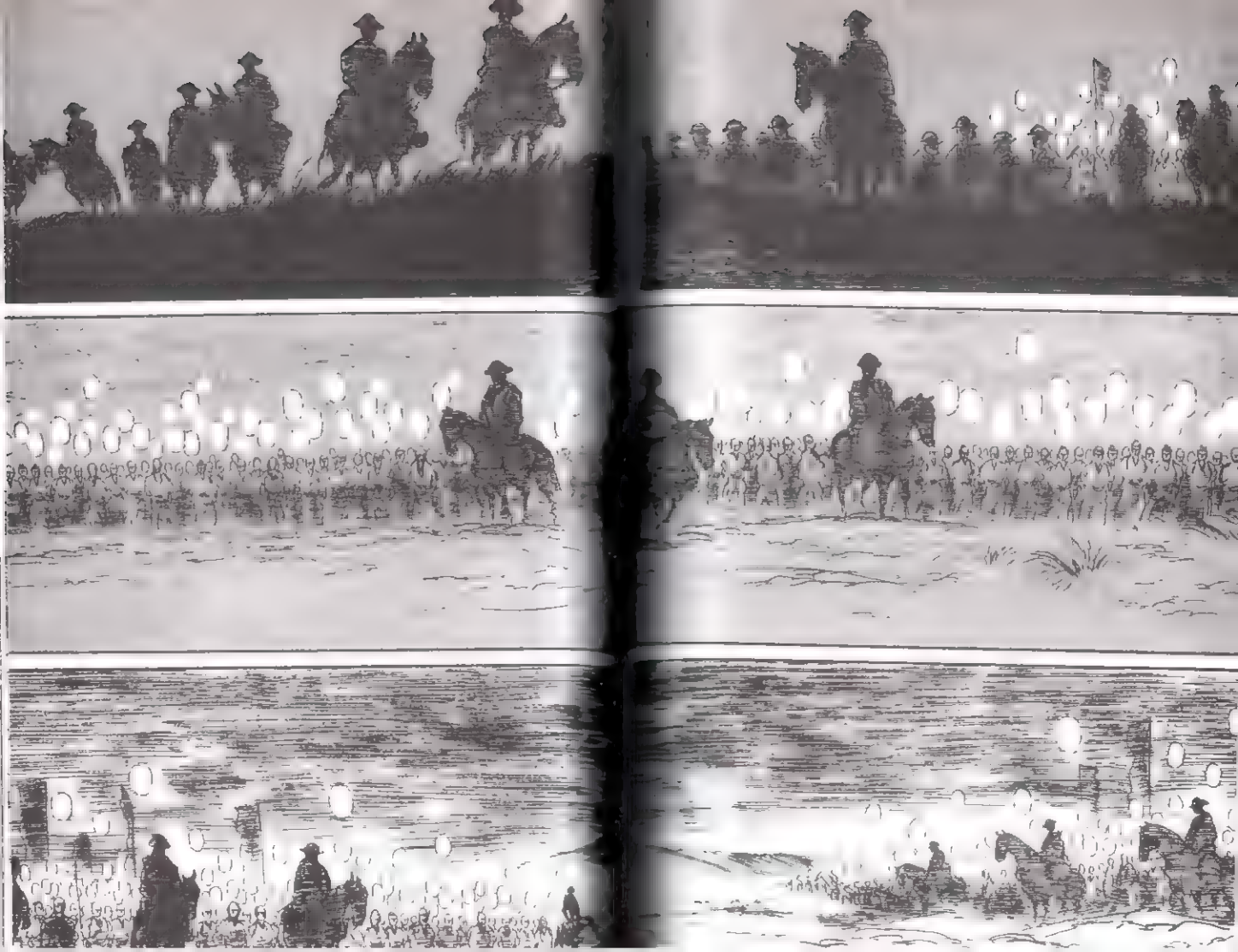

"WE PLEDGED FEALTY TO THE TOKUGAWA, NOT THE YAGYŪ
"A VASSAL THAT USES HIS MASTER IS DISLOYAL BEYOND MEASURE. A PARASITE EATING ITS HOST. THE SHŌGUN SHOULD CONDEMN THE SINS OF THE YAGYŪ, AND DISGRACE THEM."
水戸家
"MITO CLAN
紀州家
"KISHU CLAN
THE TOKUGAWA DAIMYŌ KNEW THEY WERE RIGHT. IT SEEMED AS CLEAR AS DAY THAT THE SHŌGUN WOULD BE CORNERED
SHOULD THE SHŌGUN TRY BRAZEN HIS WAY THROUGH, ARE WERE THOSE AMONG THE TOKUGAWA READY TO FIGHT HIM TO THE DEATH. THE FUSE WAS WAITING FOR THE SPARK.
尾張家
"OBARI CLAN

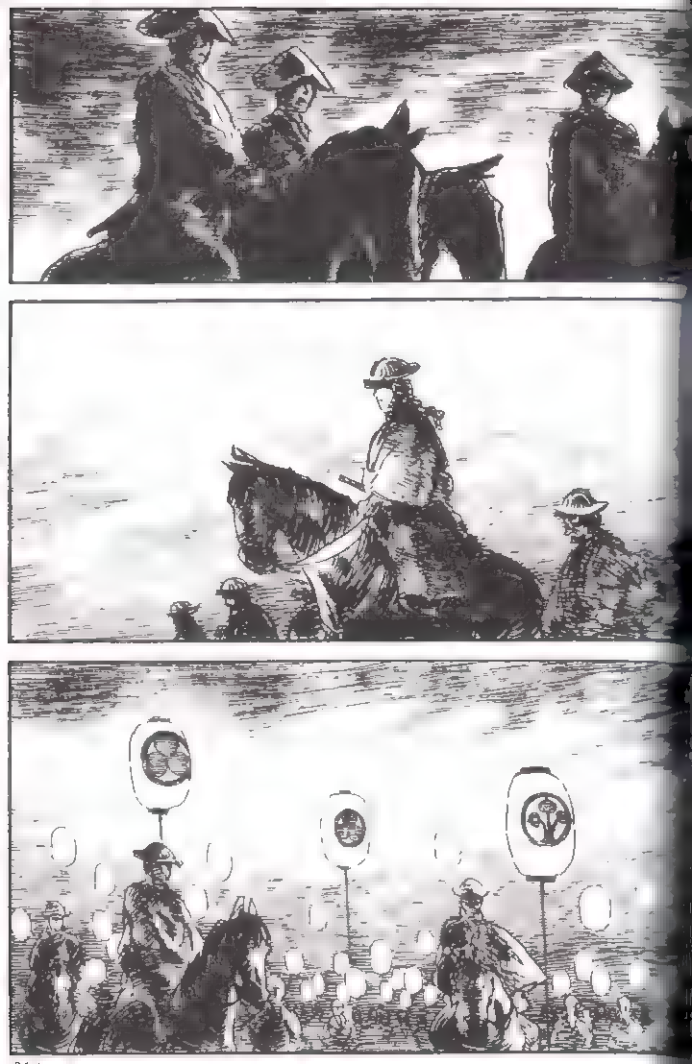

*MITO CLAN
SHOULD THE SHŌGUN TRY
*RAZEN HIS WAY THROUGH,
…E WERE THOSE AMONG THE
…ZAMA READY TO FIGHT HIM
…E DEATH. THE FUSE WAS
…TING FOR THE SPARK.
*OBARI CLAN

THE SHOGUN'S THINKING WAS THUS -
THOKKA
THOKKATA
AND THUS, LOST IN THEIR THOUGHTS, THE SHŌGUN AND THE TOZAMA, THE JIKISAN, GO-SANKE, AND HACHIKATA...
永代橋
*EITA BRIDGE
ALL CONVERGED ON THE HATCHŌ STRAND, READY TO EXPLODE INTO BATTLE


THE SHOGUN'S THINKING WAS THUS -
THOKKA
THOKKATA
-EVEN IF THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ RODE IN FORCE, THERE WERE NONE AMONG THEM BOLD ENOUGH TO TAKE UP ARMS. HE WOULD FACE THEM DOWN.
AND THUS, LOST IN THEIR THOUGHTS, THE SHŌGUN AND THE TOZAMA, THE JIKISAN GO-SANKE, AND MACHIKATA...
永代橋
*EITA BRIDGE
...ALL CONVERGED ON THE HATCHŌ STRAND, READY TO EXPLODE INTO BATTLE
兩國橋
*RYŌGOKU BRIDGE

—EVEN IF THE TOZAMA DAIMYŌ RODE IN FORCE, THERE WERE NONE AMONG THEM BOLD ENOUGH TO TAKE UP ARMS HE WOULD FACE THEM DOWN.
両國橋
"RYŌGOKU BRIDGE."

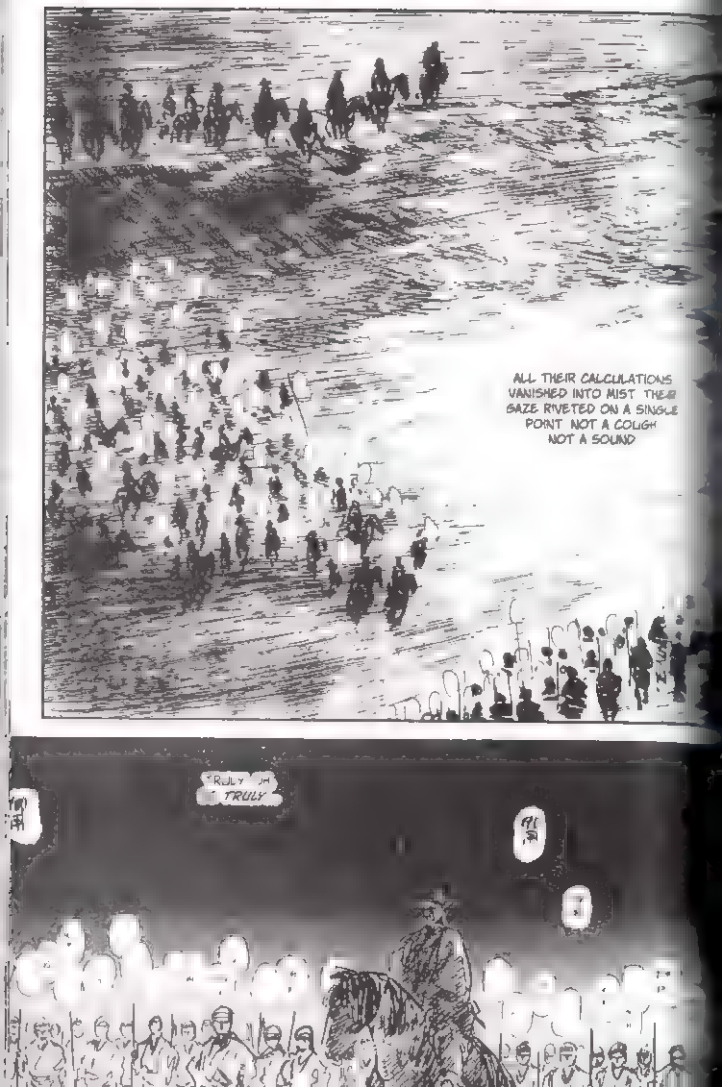


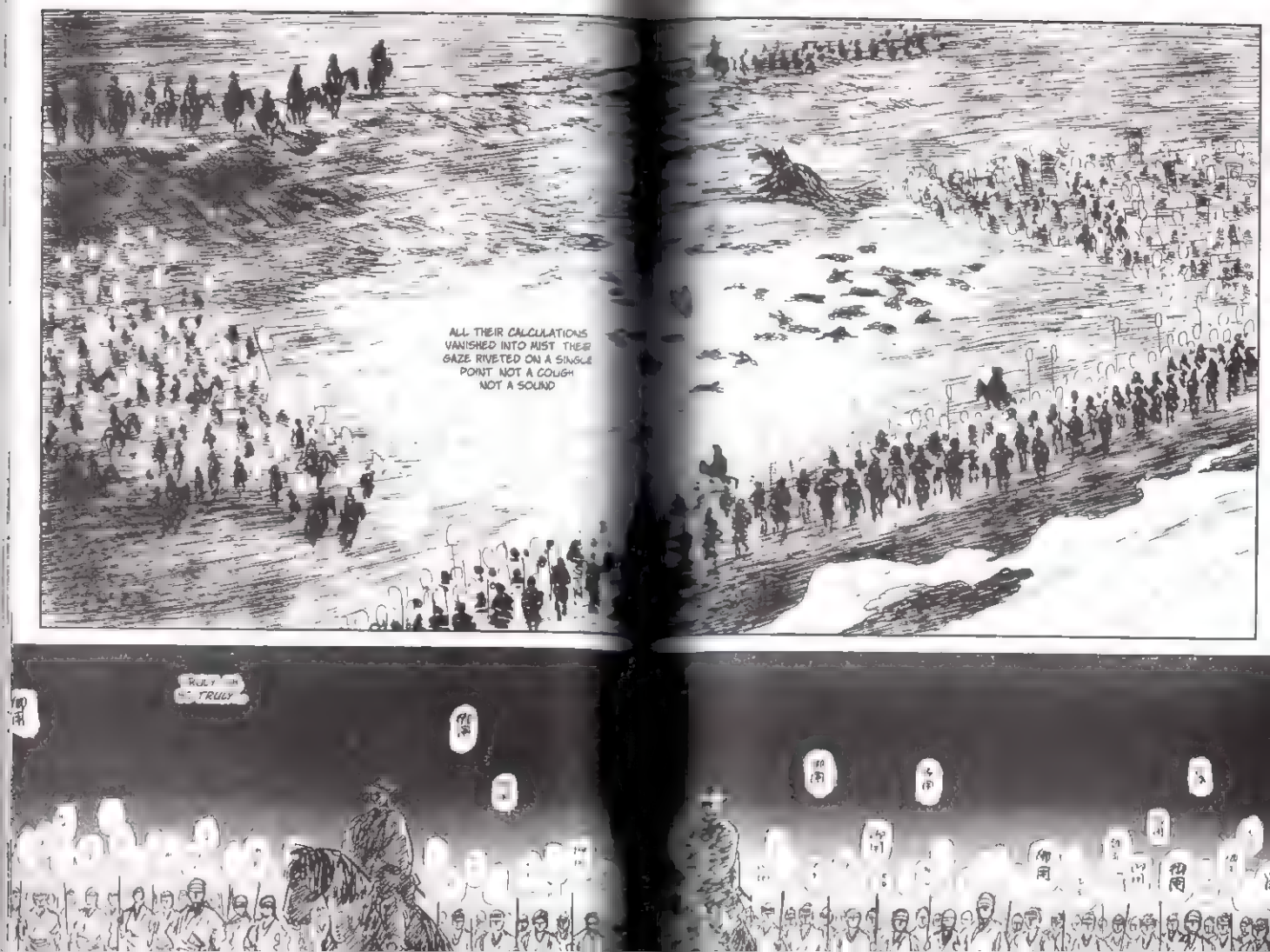


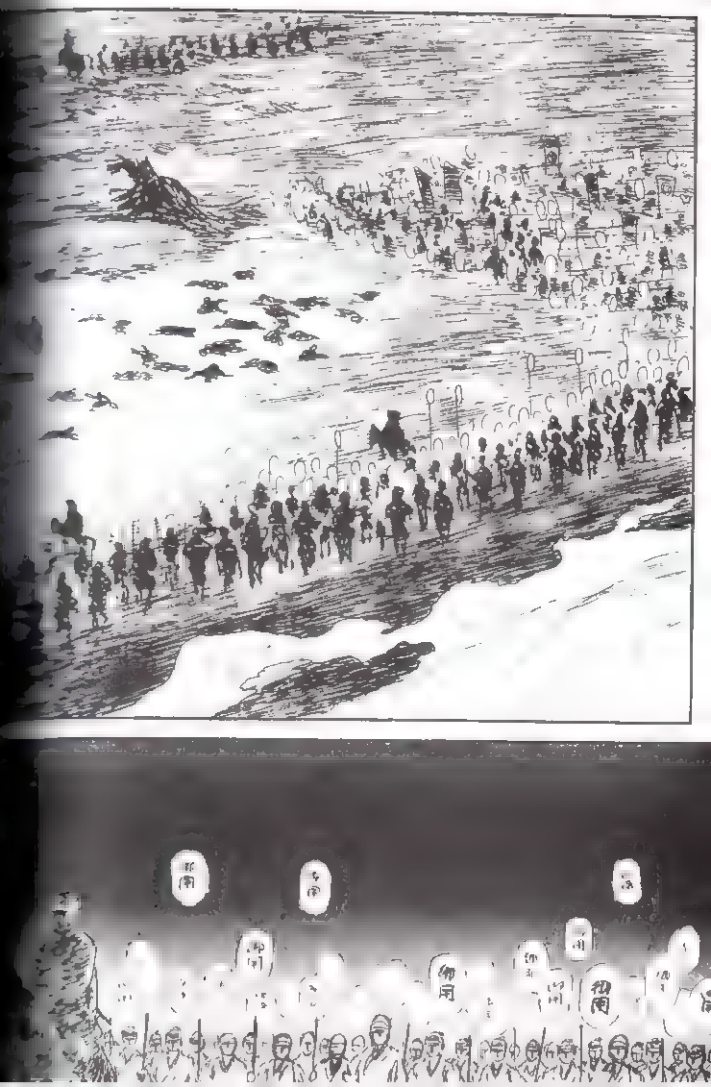
BUT
NOTHING
HAPPENED

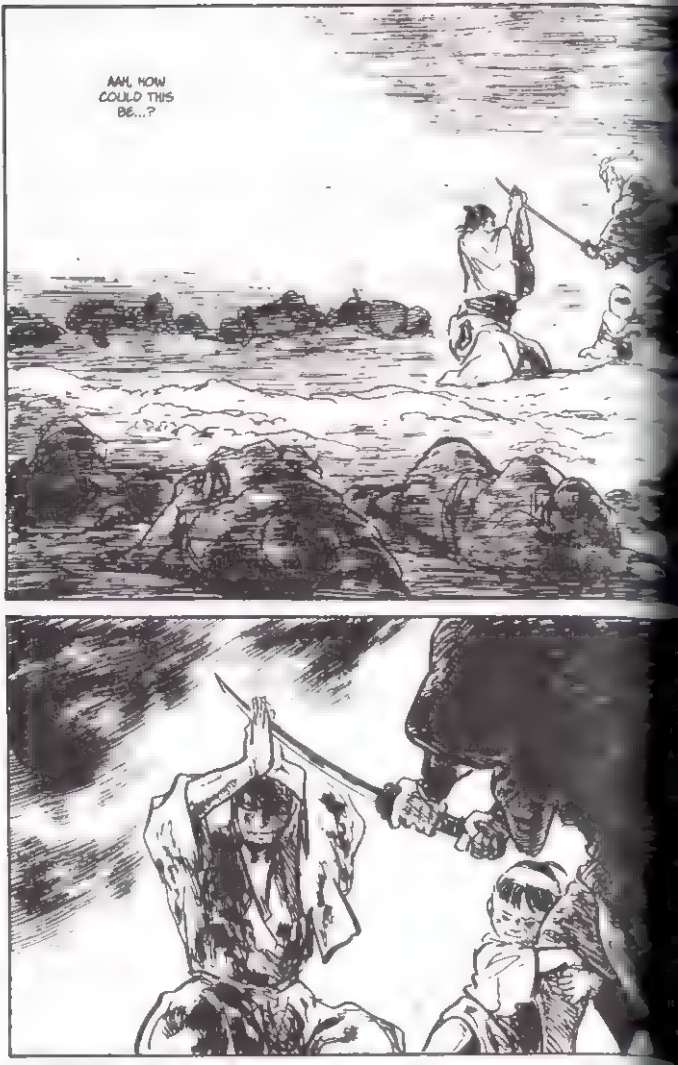
BUT NOTHING HAPPENED
NOTHING AT ALL

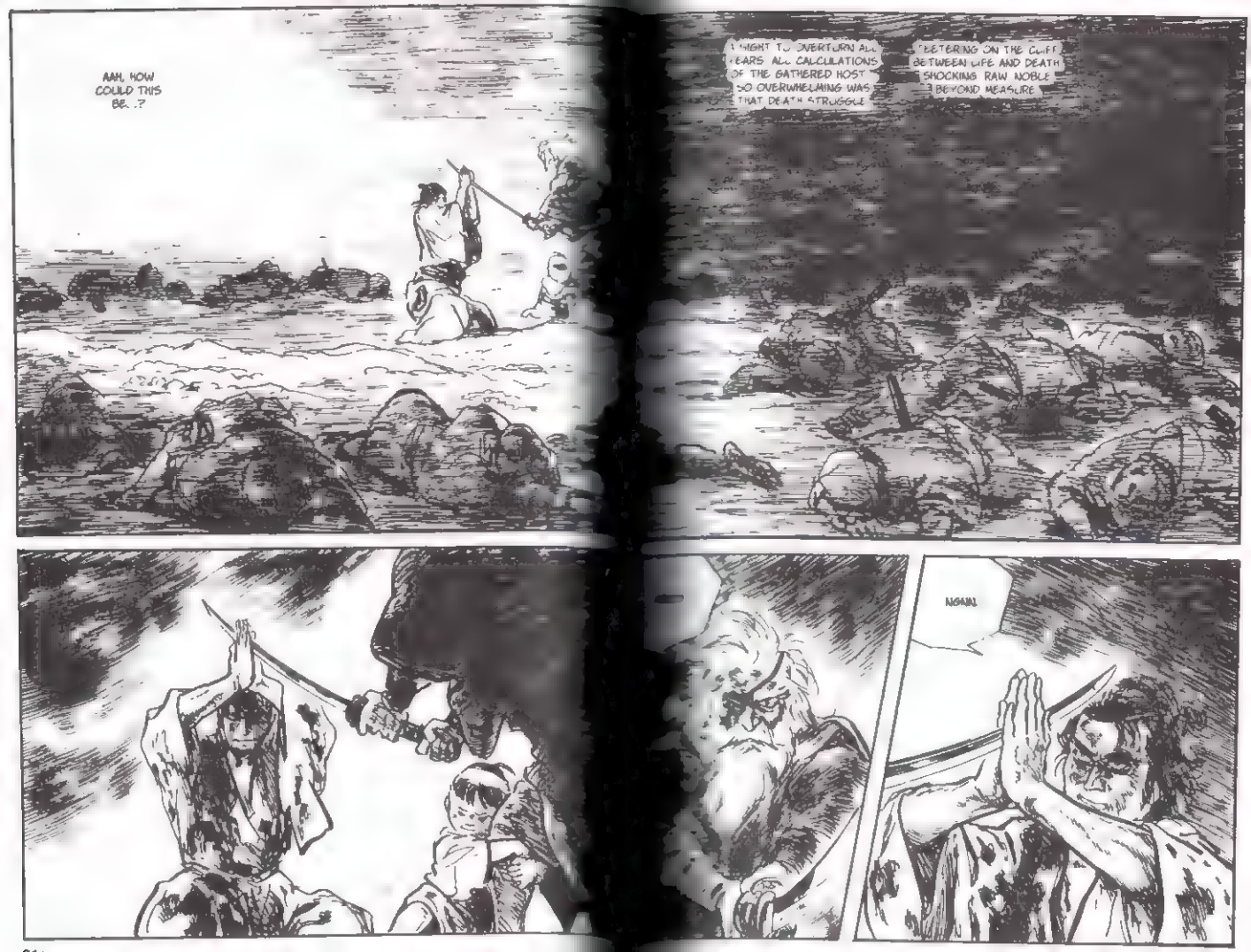
NOTHIN' AT ALL


ALL THEIR CALCULATIONS VANISHED INTO MIST THEIR GAZE RIVETED ON A SINGLE POINT NOT A COUGH NOT A SOUND
TRULY
TRULY


ALL THEIR CALCULATIONS VANISHED INTO MIST. THEIR GAZE RIVETED ON A SINGLE POINT. NOT A COUGH. NOT A SOUND.
TRULY
TRULY



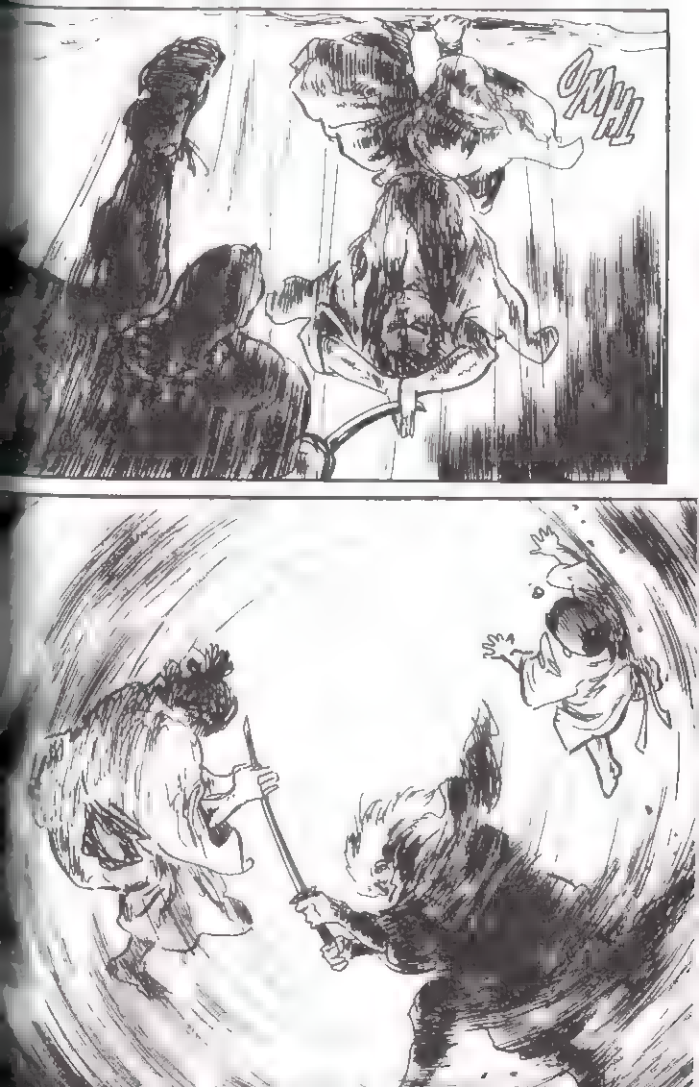

AAH, HOW
COULD THIS
BE...?

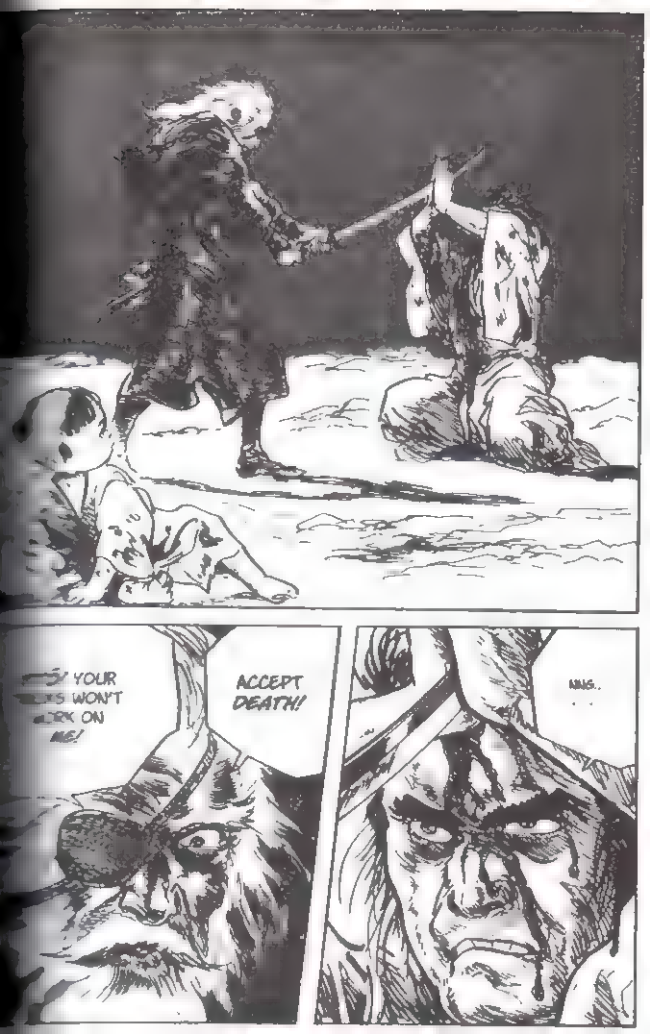

AAH, HOW COULD THIS BE..?
I MIGHT TO OVERTURN ALL YEARS ALL CALCULATIONS OF THE GATHERED HOST SO OVERWHELMING WAS THAT DEATH STRUGGLE
TEETERING ON THE CLIFF BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH SHOCKING RAW NOBLE BEYOND MEASURE
NGAH!

A SIGHT TO OVERTURN ALL FEARS ALL CALCULATIONS OF THE GATHERED HOST SO OVERWHELMING WAS THAT DEATH STRUGGLE
TEETERING ON THE CLIFF BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH SHOCKING RAW NOBLE BEYOND MEASURE
AGAIN!

RRG!

AAAH!
AAH?!


Ohhh!

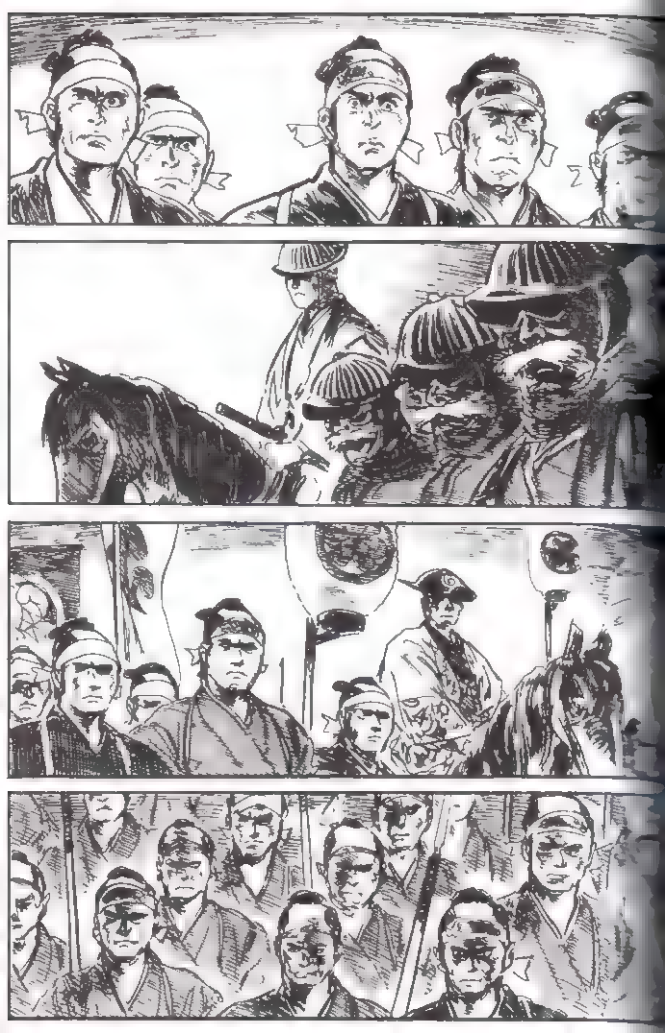

YOUR
KS WON'T
RK ON
ME!
ACCEPT
DEATH!
HMS.
. .

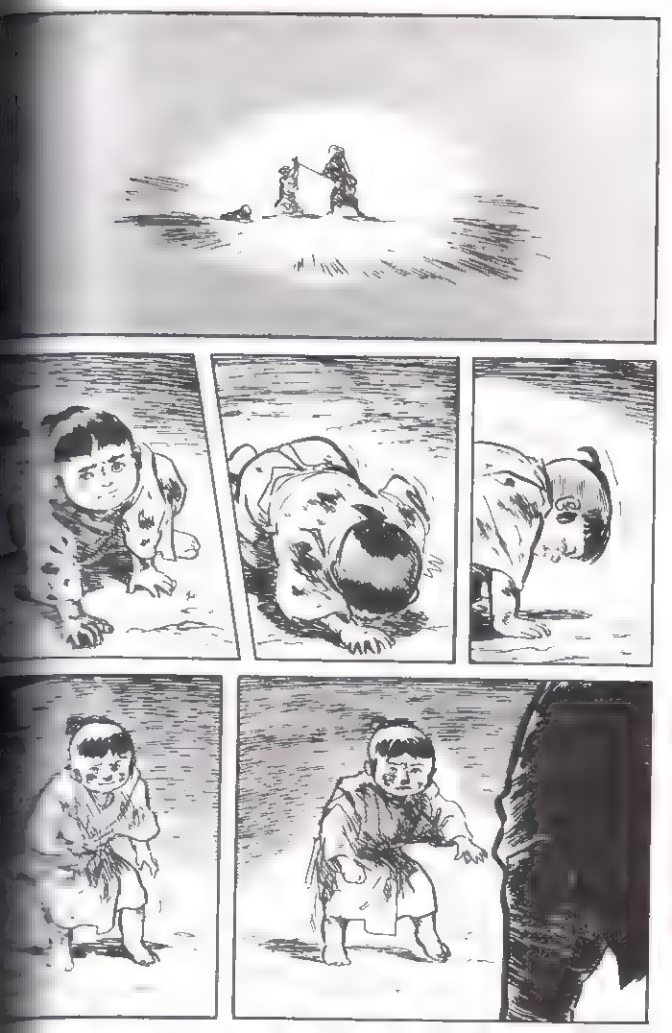
HNGN..!
RRG!!

HNGN...!
RRG!!

THD
NAL.

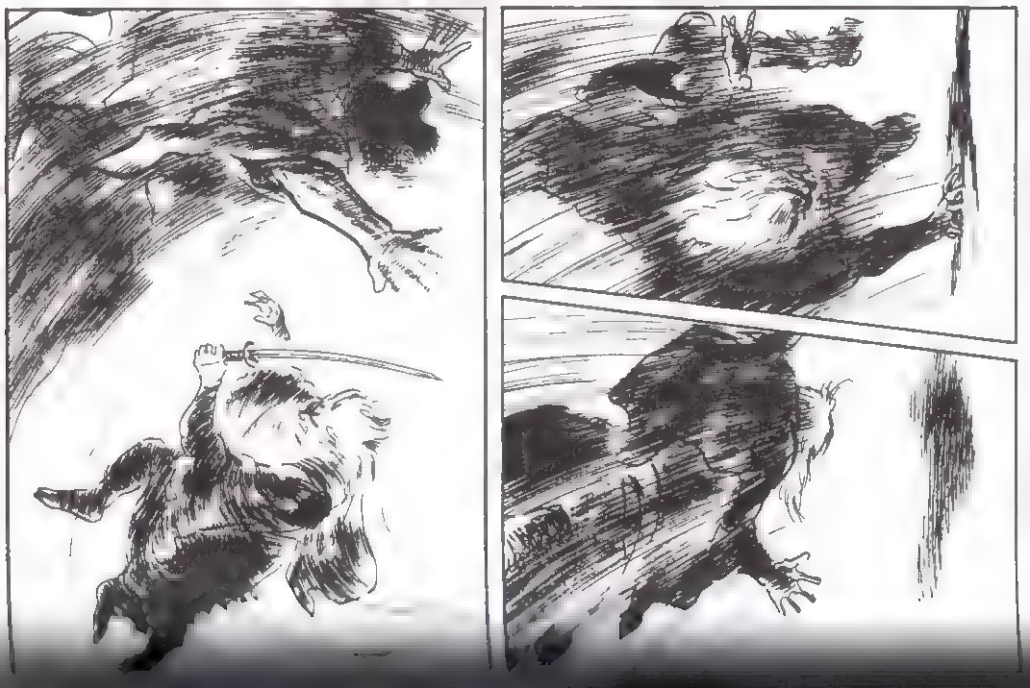
...
HAS...

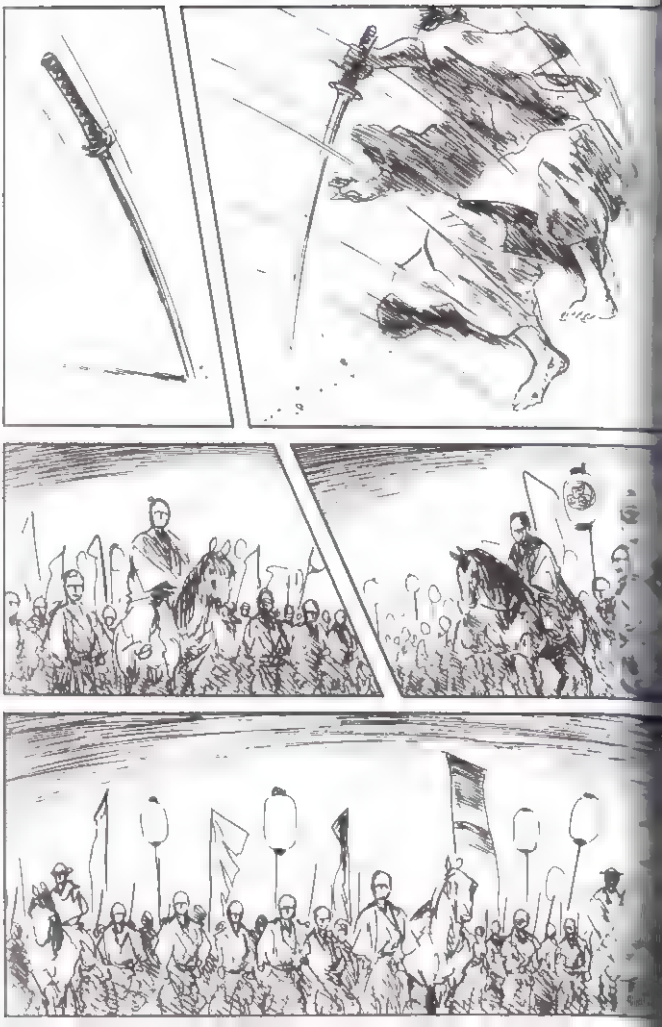




RYAAH!
HNGAHH!

HRM.

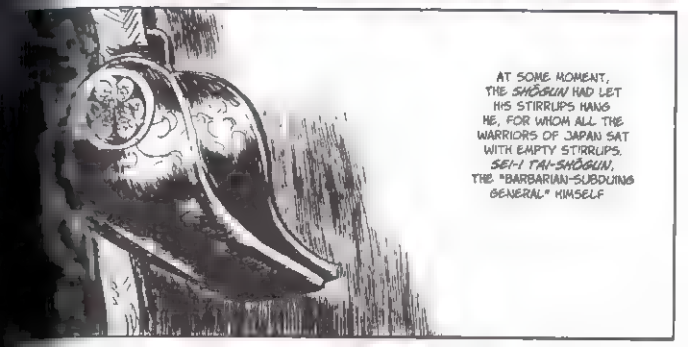


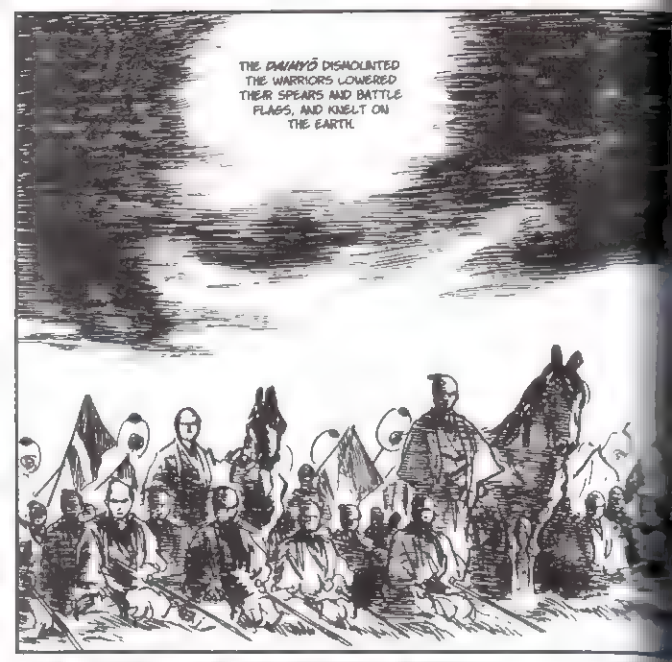


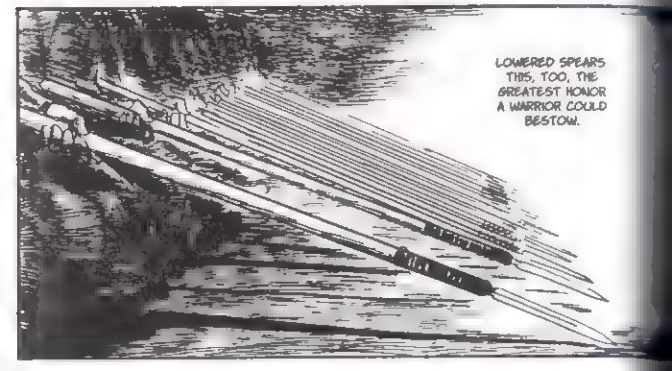
WHSSST
CHOK

THAP

EMPTY STIRRUPS.
THE ULTIMATE COURTESY, THE HIGHEST SIGN OF RESPECT


AT SOME MOMENT, THE *SHŌGUN* HAD LET HIS STIRRUPS HANG HE, FOR WHOM ALL THE WARRIORS OF JAPAN SAT WITH EMPTY STIRRUPS. *SEI-I TAI-SHŌGUN*, THE "BARBARIAN-SUBDUING GENERAL" HIMSELF


THE DAIMYŌ DISMOUNTED THE WARRIORS LOWERED THEIR SPEARS AND BATTLE FLAGS, AND KNELT ON THE EARTH.

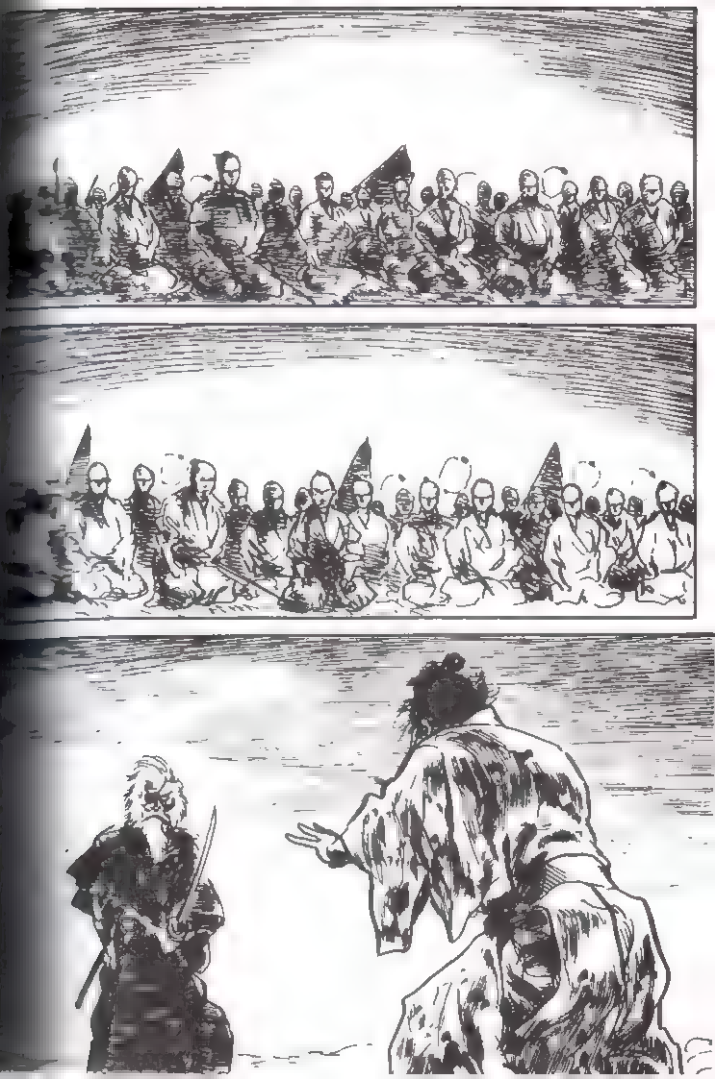

LOWERED SPEARS THIS, TOO, THE GREATEST HONOR A WARRIOR COULD BESTOW.

THEY COULD NOT DO OTHERWISE, SO AWESOME WAS THIS BATTLE TO THE DEATH.

NANG...
PAPAAA!!

SSH!
NFF !

KYAAH!

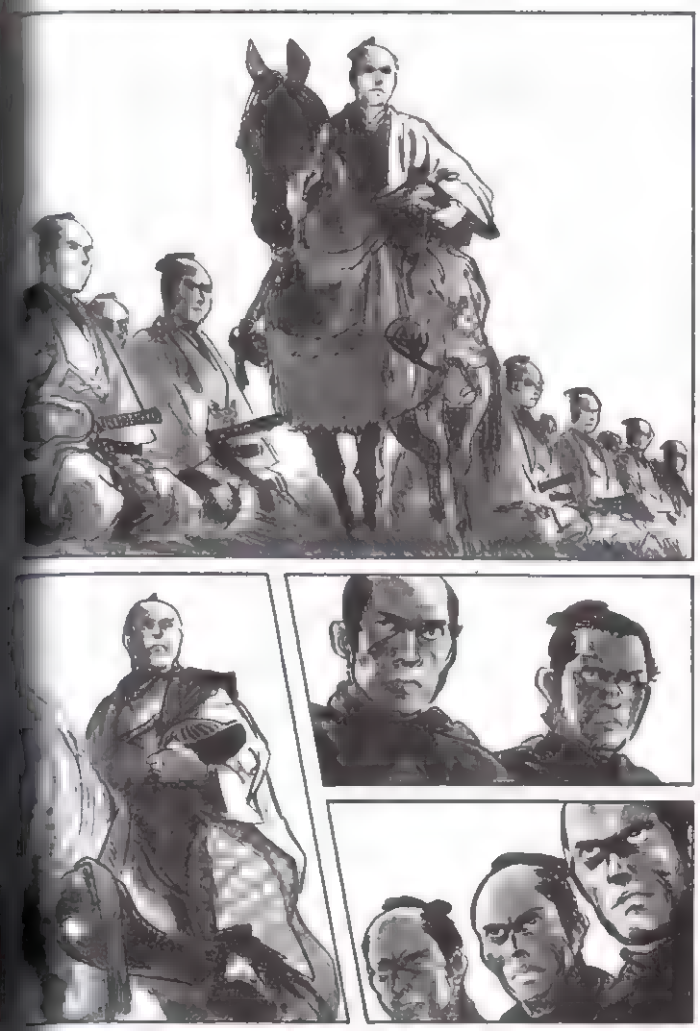


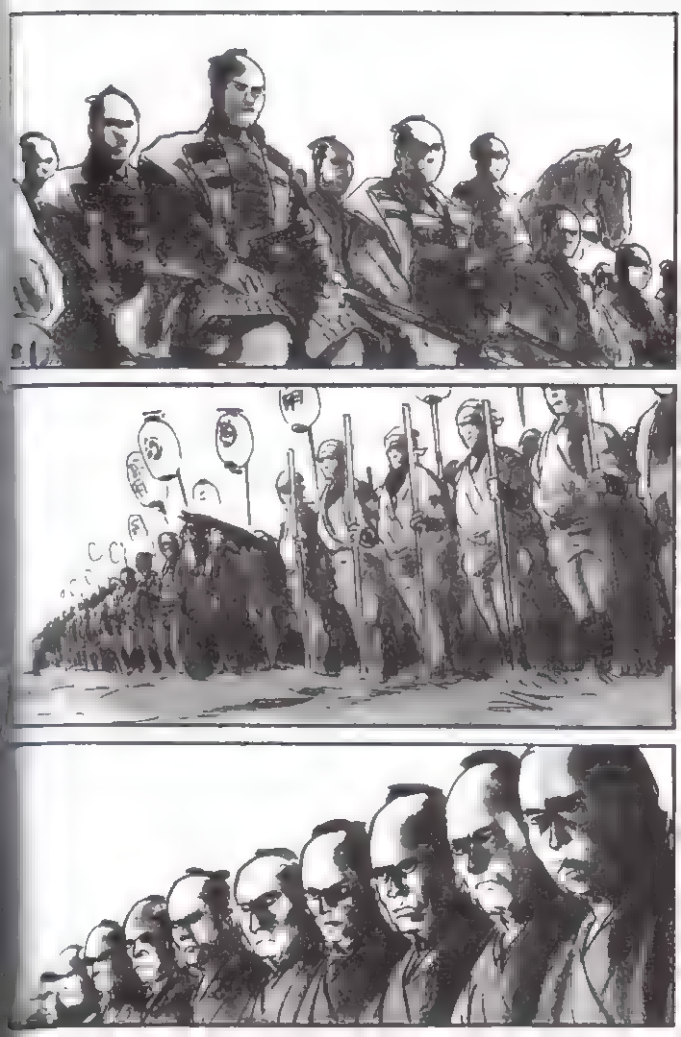
HYAH!
SPAKK
NNGG
PA.
RRWK
NNNGG

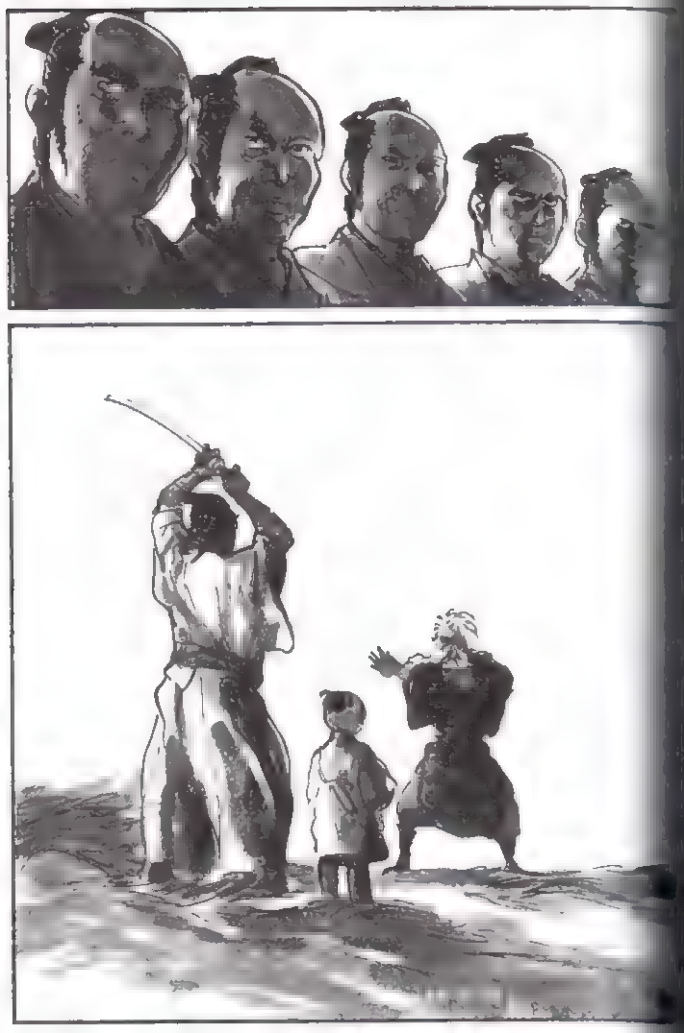
NGYAAH!

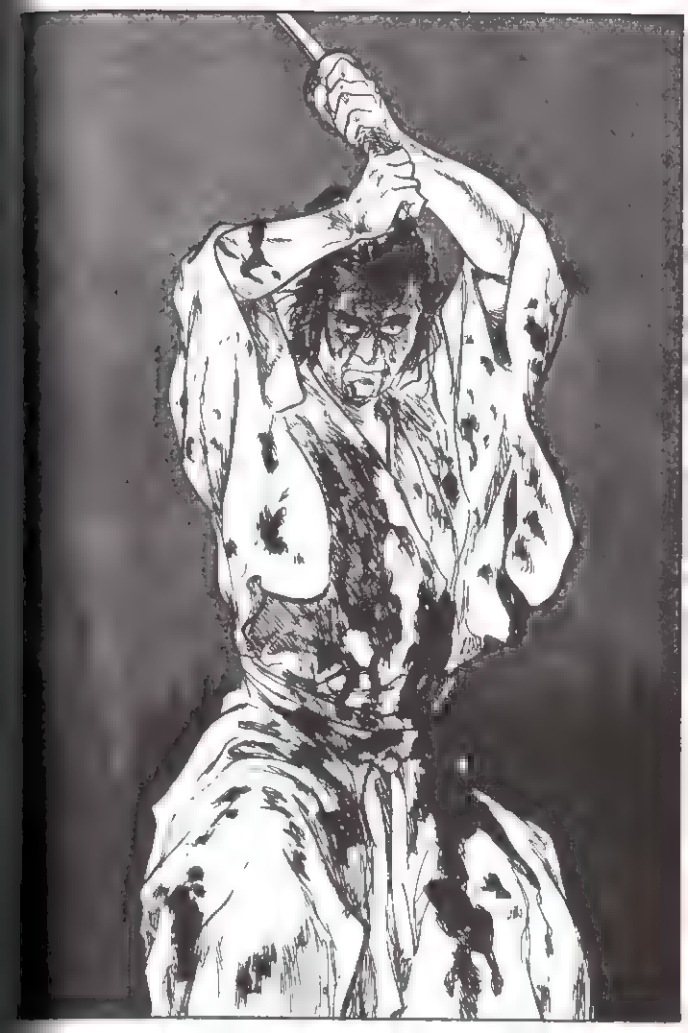
the hundred and forty-second

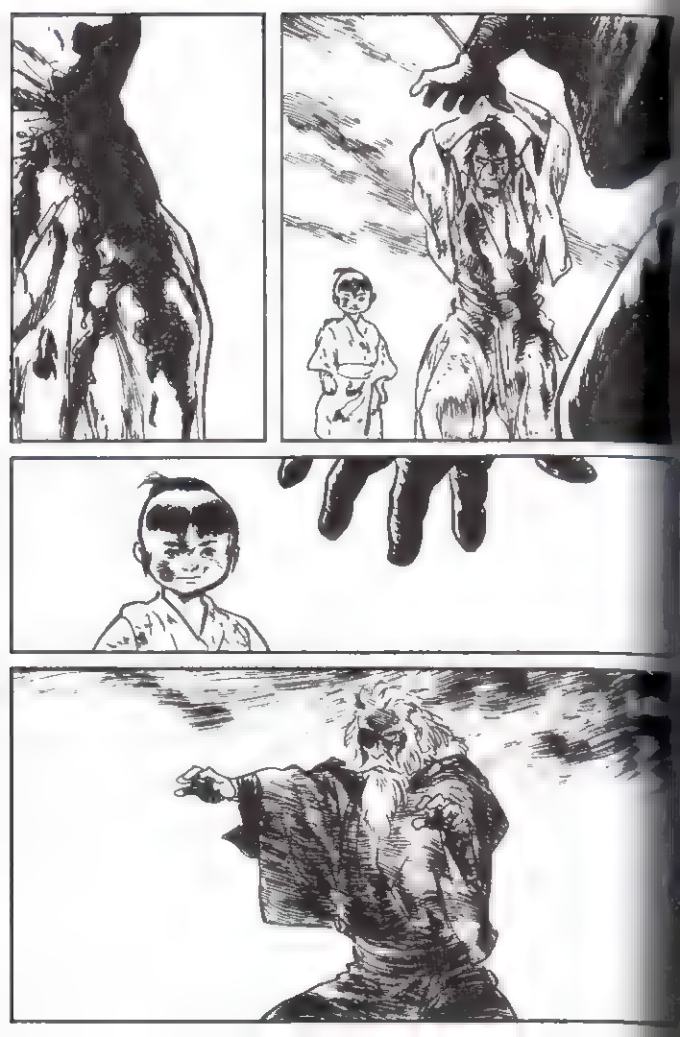
Arms





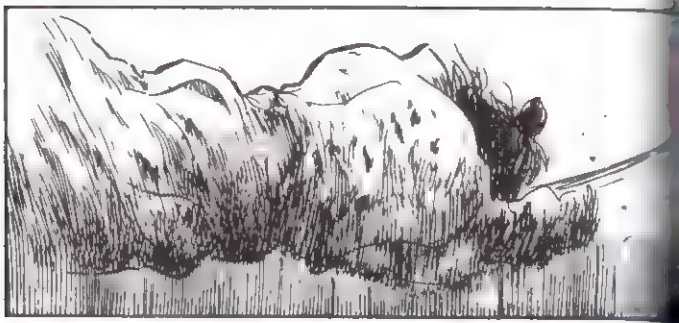


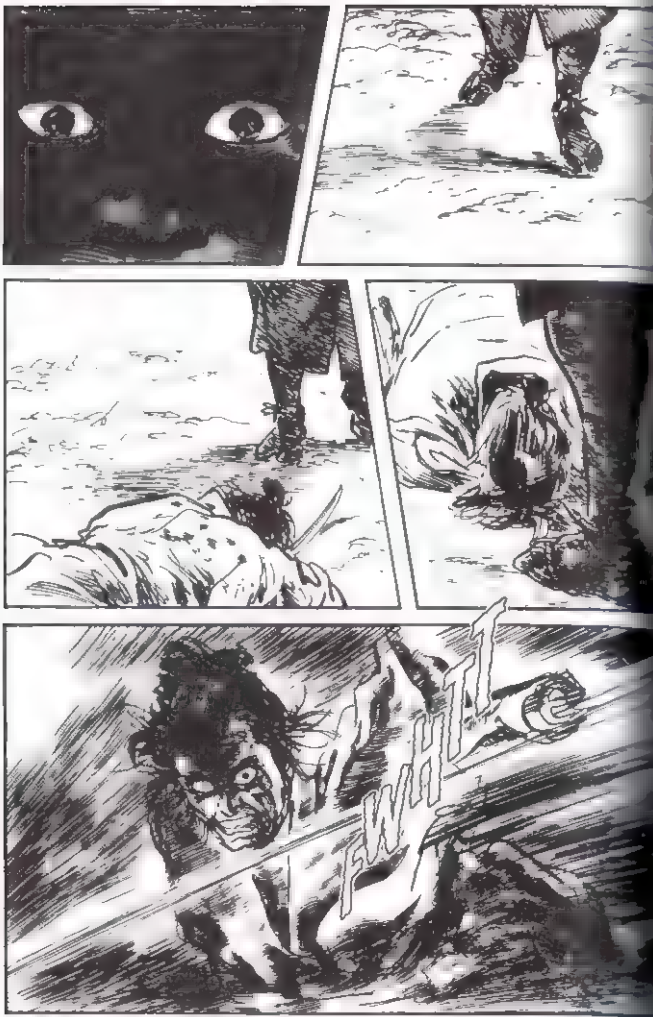




PAPAAA!

PAPAAA!




FWHIT

SKSSS

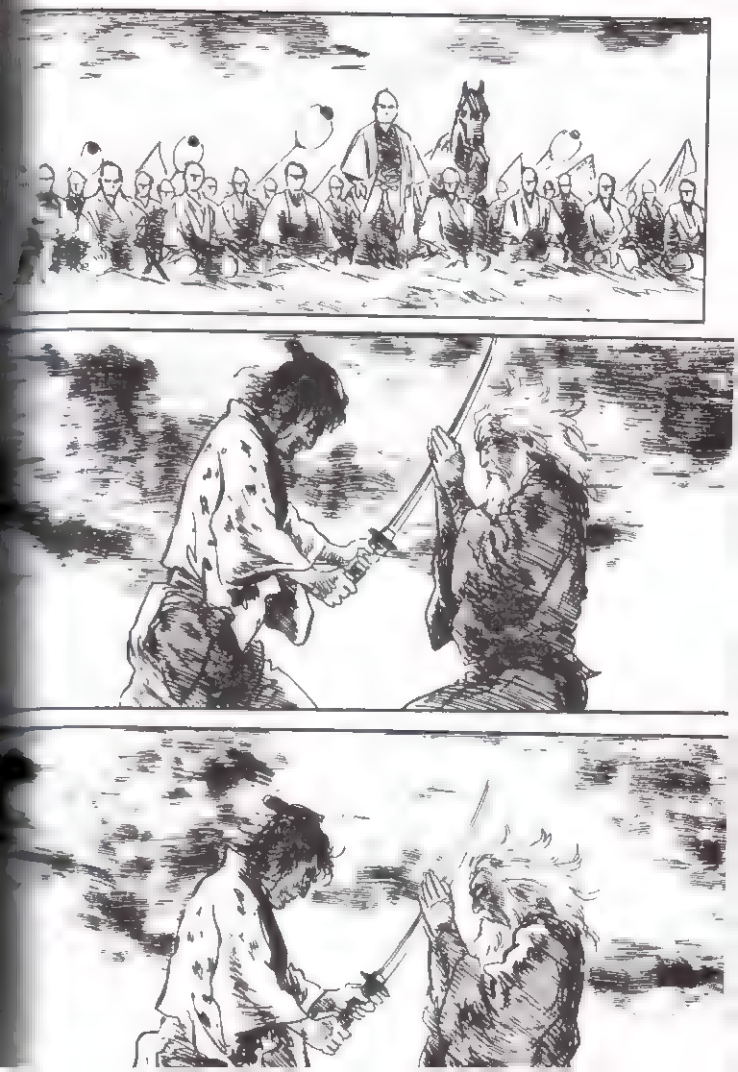
WHSSH
SLAM
SLIT
SLIT

SHSH
SKSHH
UUHH

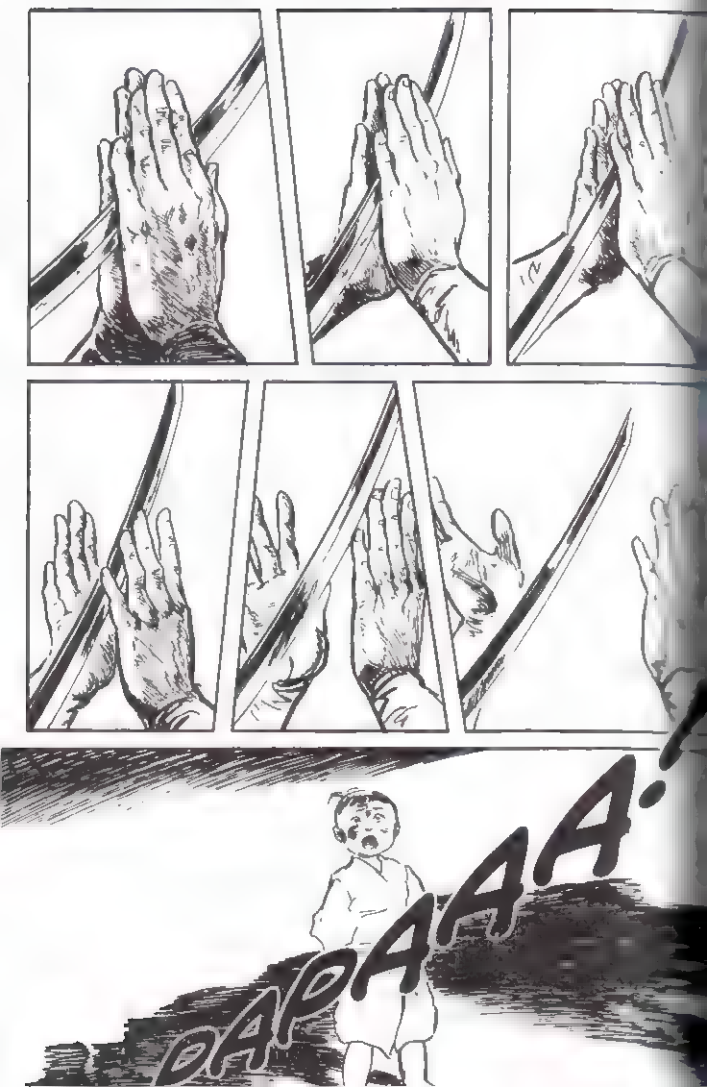
ПАР

BRILLIANT ACTING..
EVEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD BUT DAISORO'S EYES DID NOT.
THEY DID NOT BELIEVE IN YOUR DEATH
"THE WISDOM OF A CHILD," THEY SAY.
HOW IRONIC! THE GODS WANT YOUR LIFE MORE THAN MINE...
SUCH IS HEAVEN'S WILL!

RRG
.....



AHH.
.....
.....


DAPAA!

UAAHHH!

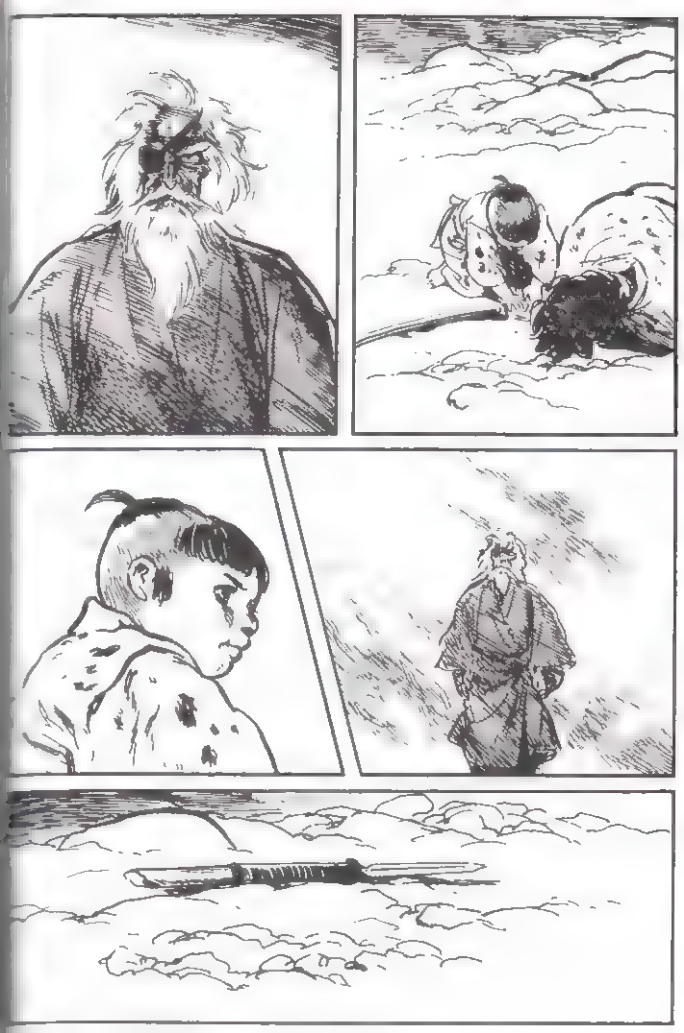
AHHHHHNN!

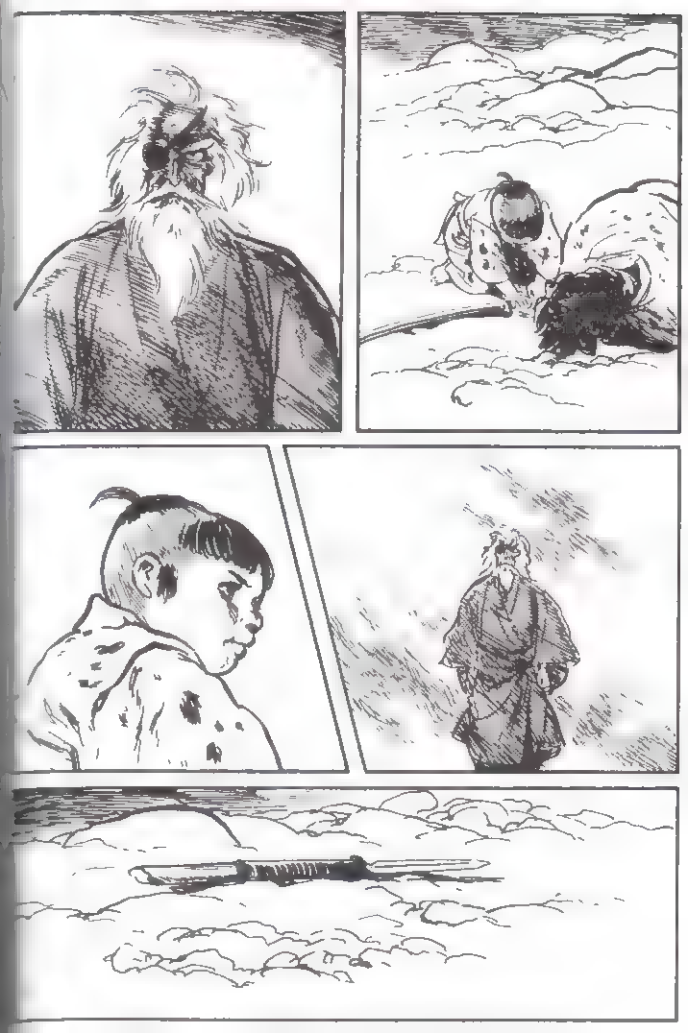
PAPAAAA!

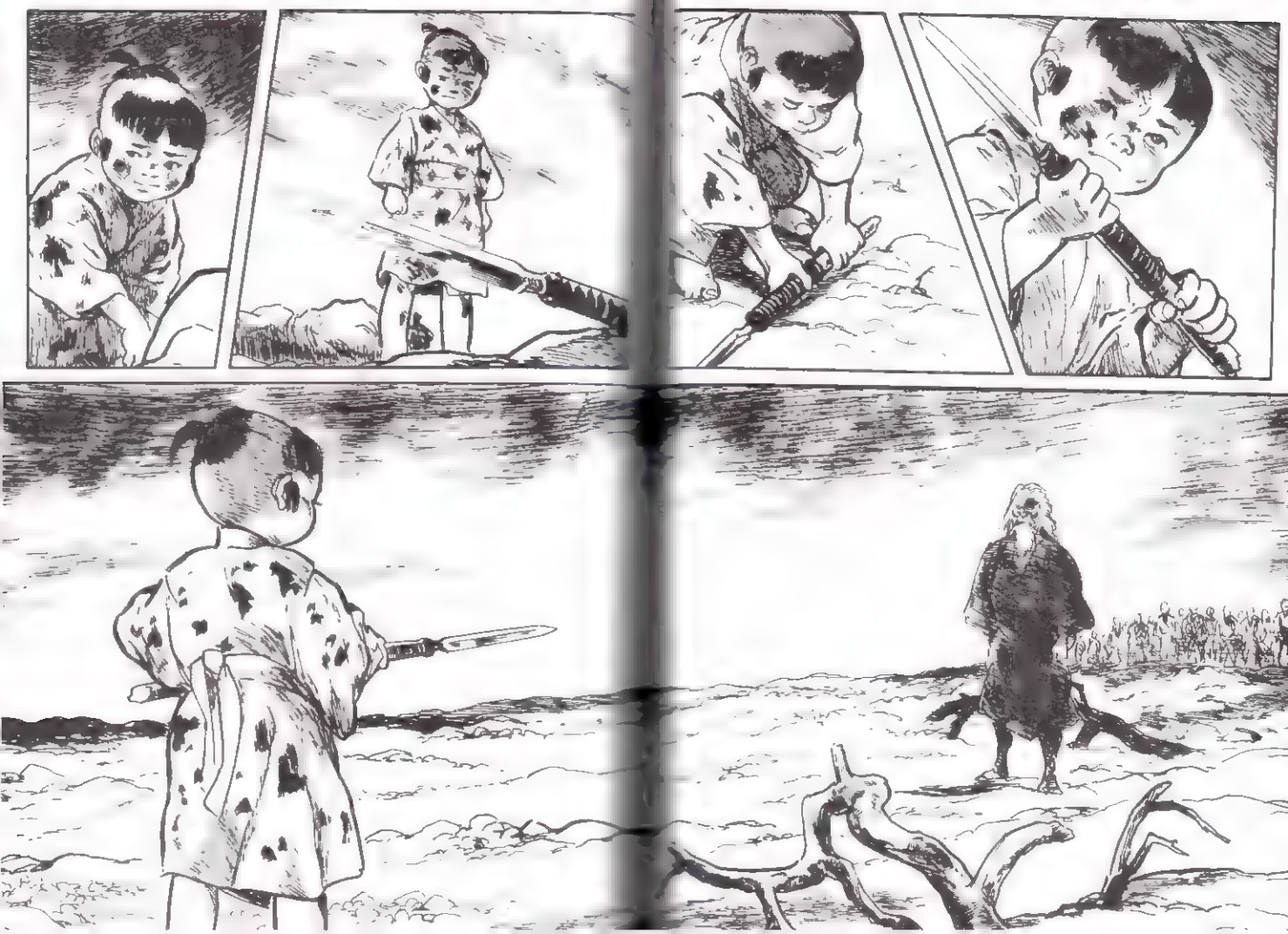
THE RIVER FLOWS INTO THE OCEAN, AND TURNS TO WAVES.
WAVES, SURGING AND RECEDING, WITHOUT END.

OUR LIVES ARE LIKE THE WAVES. WE LIVE, WE DIE, WE ARE REBORN.
SOON YOUR FATHER'S BODY WILL BE A SILENT CORPSE BUT, LIKE THE WAVES, MY LIFE WILL NOT END

LIKE THE WAVES, YOUR FATHER WILL TRAVEL TO THE SHORE OF THE NEXT LIFE.
HIS BODY MAY DIE, BUT HIS LIFE IS ETERNAL.
YOURS, TOO, DAIGORO.

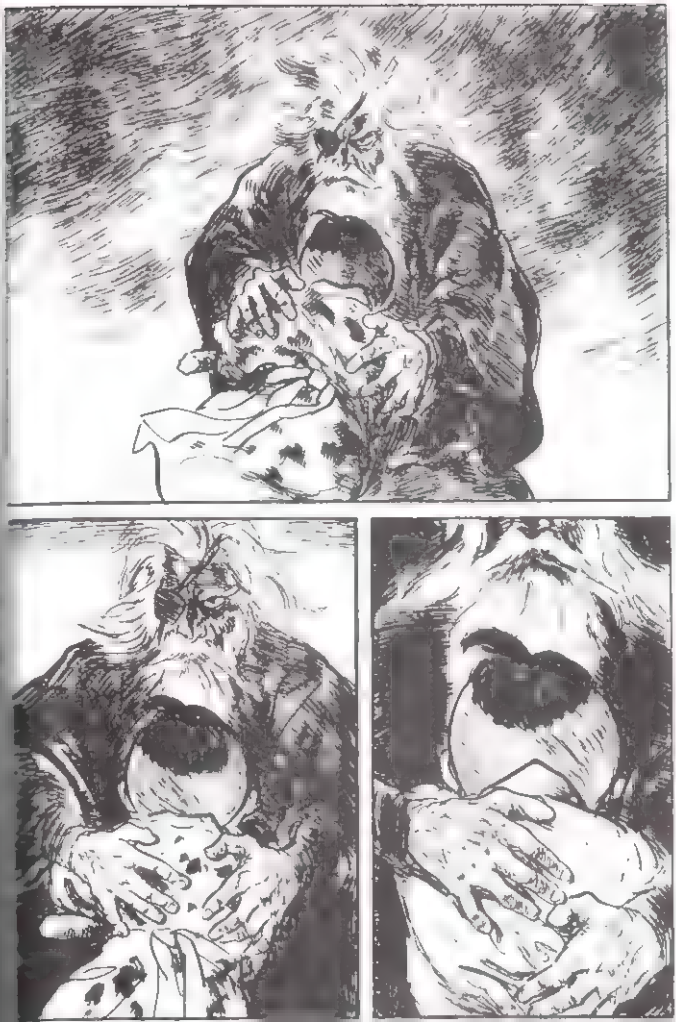


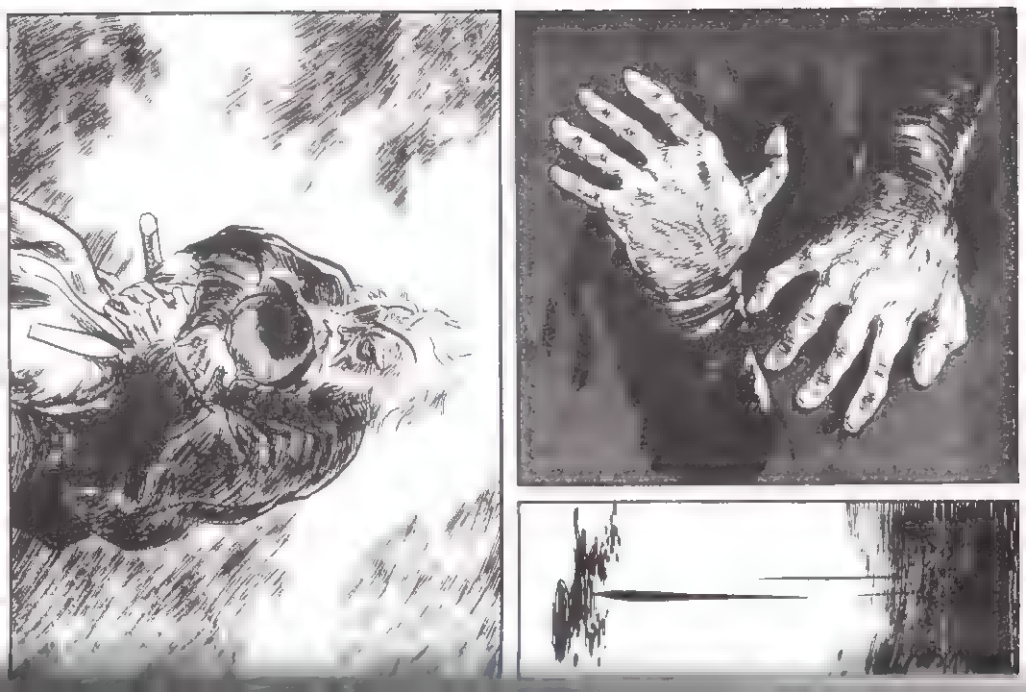


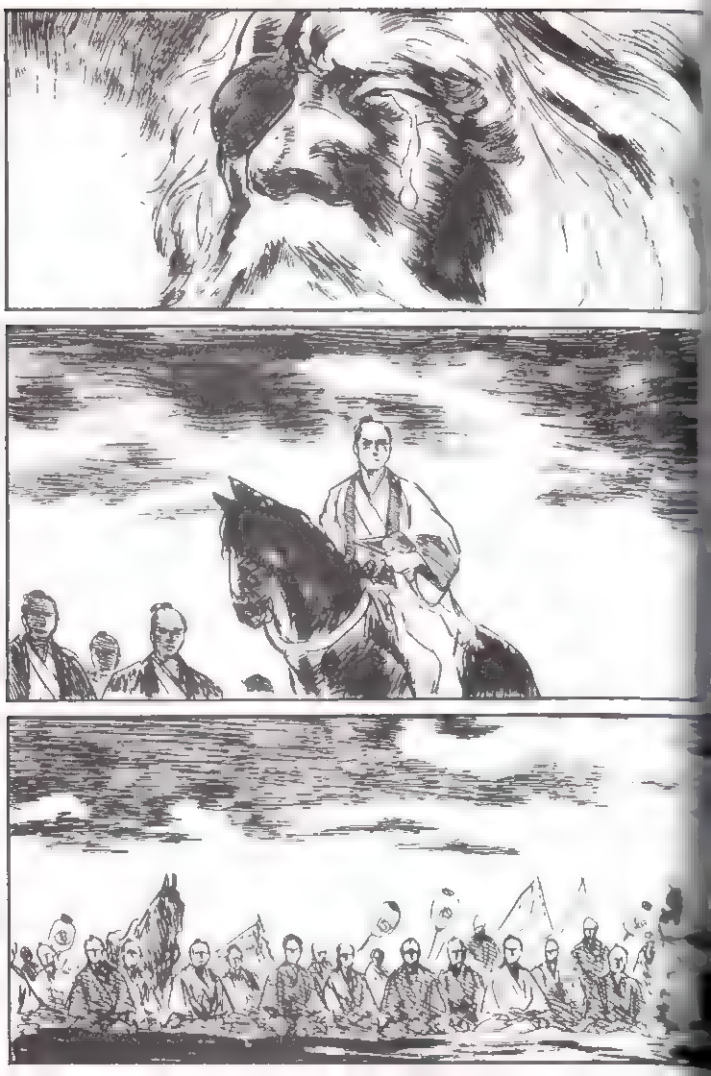


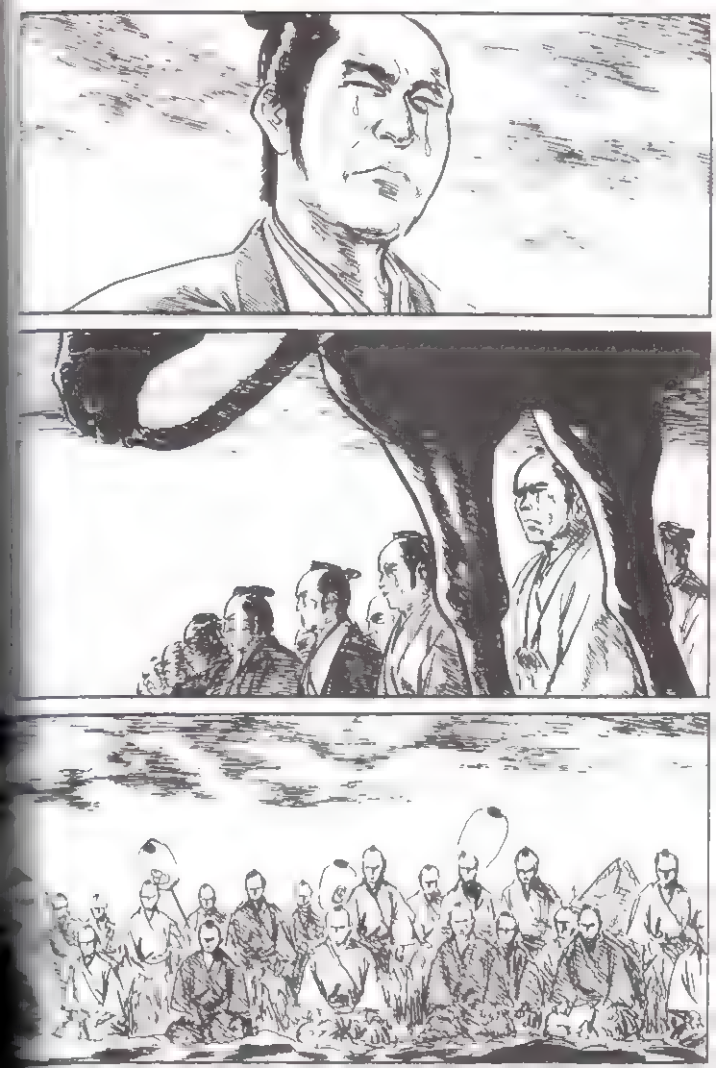
AAAAAAAAH!

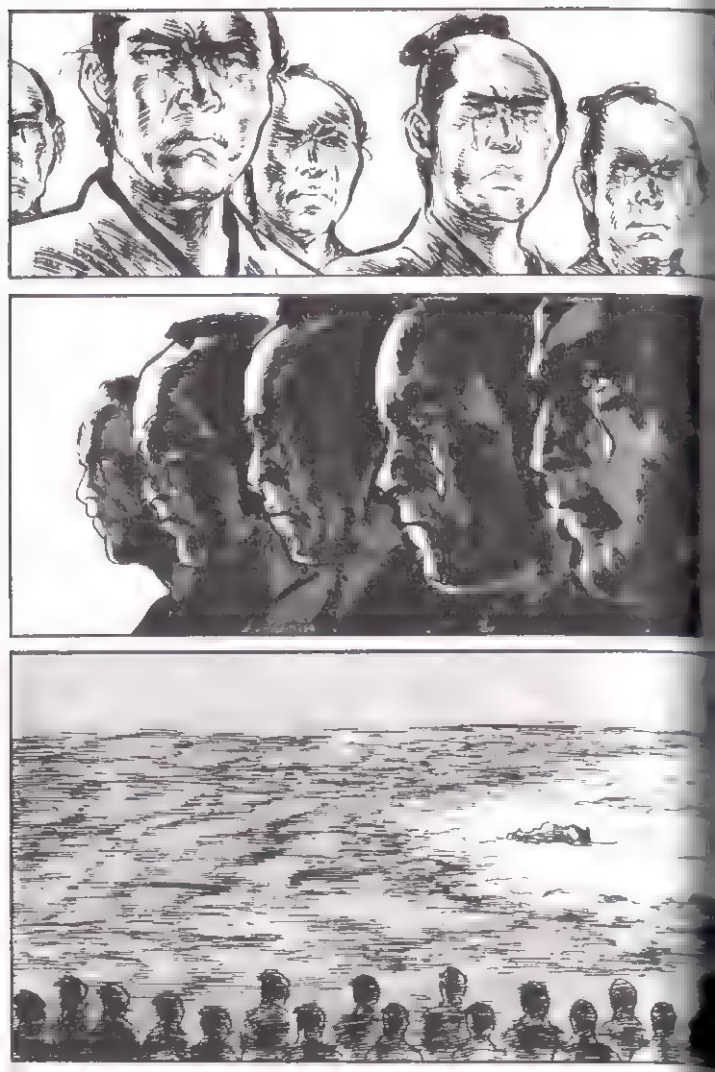
CHUKK

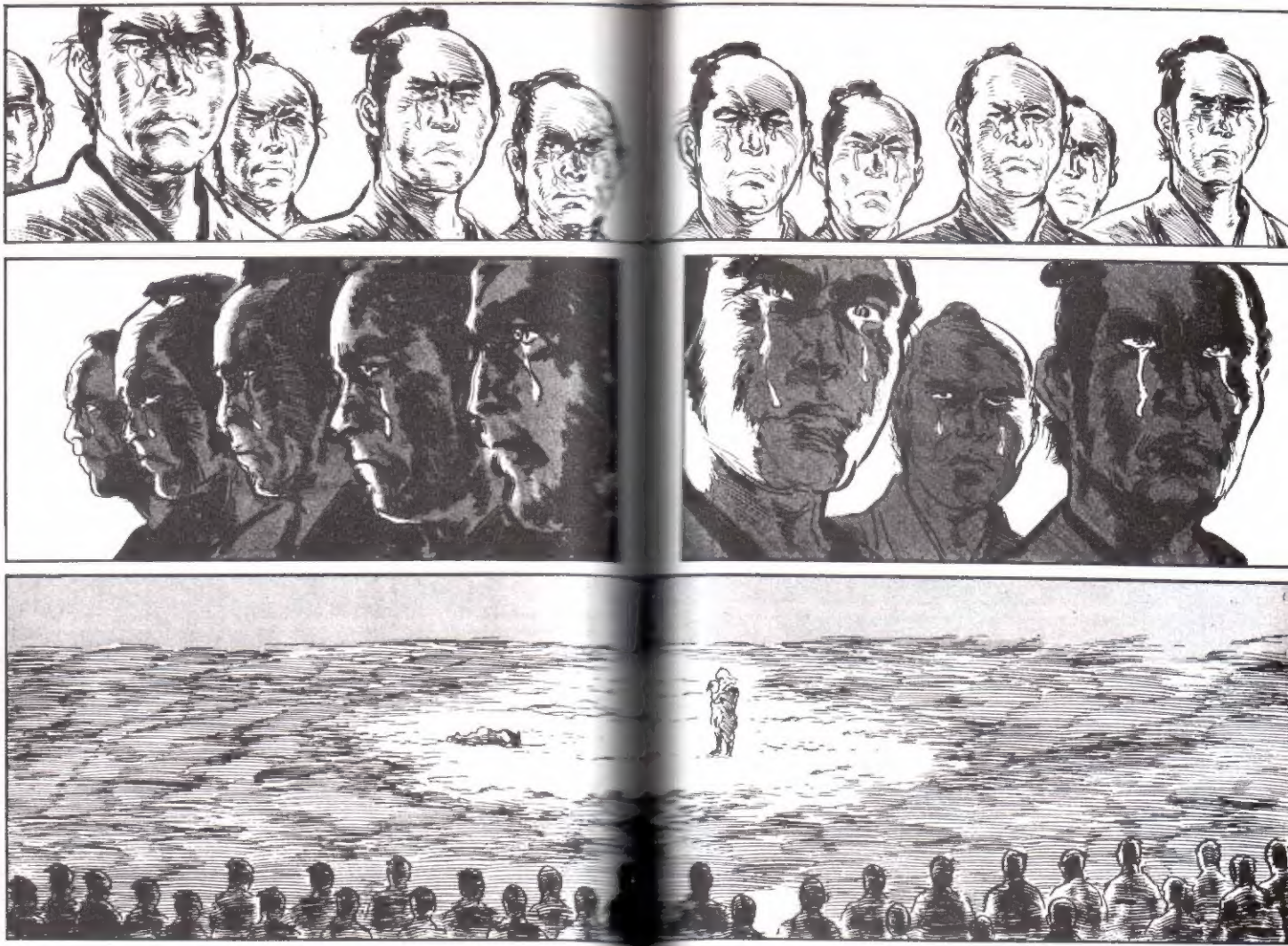


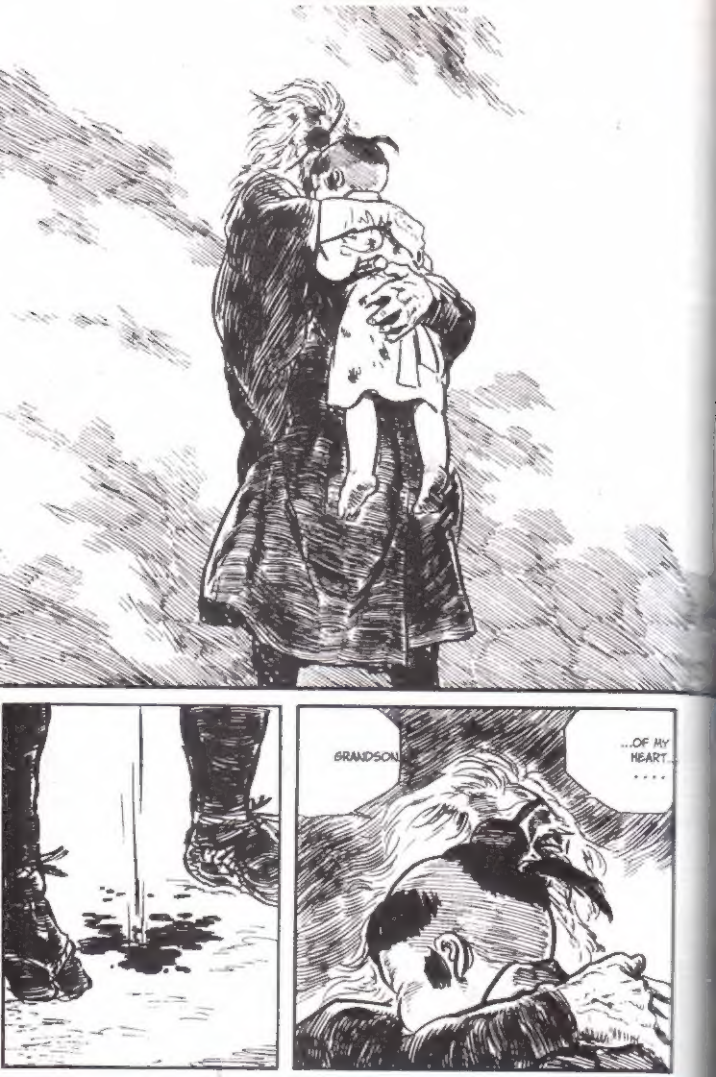








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The End